The World's Classics

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UNDINE, SINTRAM
ASLAUGA'S KNIGHT
THE TWO CAPTAINS

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UNDINE

AND OTHER STORIES

From the German of

LA MOTTE FOUQUÉ

With an Introduction

by

SIR EDMUND GOSSE

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FRIEDRICH HEINRICH KARL, BARON DE LA MOTTE FOUQUÉ

Born, Brandenburg . . . . 12 February 1777.
Died, Berlin . . . . . 23 January 1843.

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Sir Edmund Gosse's introduction and translation (1896) of Undine *are reprinted here by permission of Mr. Philip Gosse. Julius Hare's translation of* Sintram *was first published in 1820. Carlyle's translation of* Aslauga's Knight *is here reprinted for the first time since 1827.* The Two Captains *has been specially translated for this edition by Mr. P. E. Matheson.*

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INTRODUCTION

When Heine, in full revolt against the sentimental romanticism of Prussia, was scoring the brilliant dance-music of his *Atta Troll*, he paused, half in laughter half regretfully, to speak of those dreams of youth

> That I dreamed through with Chamisso,
> And Brentano, and Fouqué,
> In the dim blue moonlit nights

of long ago. It is interesting to note that the scattered sayings of this his great enemy by temperament really contain the fairest as well as the shrewdest criticism of La Motte Fouqué which is now to be collected out of the German writers of his age. Heine respected Fouqué, though he laughed at him; he respected his childlike candour, his gallantry, his singleness of purpose, and in his very stupidity—for Fouqué was somewhat stupid—Heine had to confess a force which gave the old romantic cuirassier a way into the hearts of his readers to which clever writers, with pointed tongues in hollow cheeks, could never attain.

We, looking back to the beginning of the century, may now recognize in Fouqué the latest and the most uncompromising of the Romanticists, the man who accepted most unflinchingly the principles of that school, and who carried them out most thoroughly. 'Don Quixote', they called him, and wondered that he could venture to make his appearance two centuries after the death of his creator. To the mental vision, looking back some eighty years, Fouqué appears more as a rubicund officer of dragoons, sitting over a bivouac fire, and telling innocent fairy stories to the

honour and glory of the King of Prussia. He belongs to an order of things now absolutely gone and done with, never, in all probability, to be seen again upon this world of ours. It is recorded that he thought it unbecoming to appear out-of-doors except in full uniform, and that no one ever saw him without a sword at his side. This was not because of any genius he possessed for the art of war, or any special interest in strategy or defence, but largely out of a romantic love of the clanking of spurs and the prancing of handsome horses and all the panoply of a smart heroic dress. He lived through a most agitating period of German history, it is true, and he served in it with perfect courage and patriotism. But the exterior shows of the profession were his main delight, and it was not without a consciousness of the pomp of a cavalry officer that he uttered his famous dictum, so odd on the lips of a nineteenth-century poet, that 'war is the only perfectly real occupation for a real man's soul and body'.

The amount of literary work done by this excellent lieutenant of curassiers—work in poetry, in drama, in prose fiction, in journalism—was positively prodigious, and most of it, so far as modern readers are concerned, might very well have been left undone. His *Theatre* is immense and perfectly unreadable. With perhaps a solitary exception, he might just as usefully have spent his time in galloping up and down the streets of Berlin on one of his favourite chargers as in writing these plays. Time has found a great deal to 'pare away' from Fouqué's abundant fruitage. It has left four or five short romances which promise to be immortal, since the complete revolution of taste has not rendered them obsolete or uninteresting. Fouqué

lives by *Sintram*, by *Der Zauberring*, and by *Thiodulf*, but most of all by *Undine*—that is to say, by the least considered of his productions from his thirty-third to his thirty-eighth year. In these stories he reveals a talent which is exquisite in its way, and quite unlike the talent of any one else, and these are the dreams on moonlit nights which filled the way-worn heart of Heine with something like the tears of memory.

Friedrich Heinrich Karl, Baron de la Motte Fouqué, was born, in the ancient city of Brandenburg, on the Havel, on the 12th of February 1777. He came from a noble and a warlike family, of ancient French extraction; his grandfather had been the friend and one of the generals of Frederick the Great, had withdrawn from the army after glorious deeds, and had been made provost of the minster of Brandenburg. The prebend's house, or *curie*, in which the child was brought up, was old and haunted; he loved to think it full of phantoms and spectres. With this early indulgence in romance was combined a no less precocious interest in warfare. He tells us, in the quaint and disjointed autobiography which he wrote in the third person in 1840, that he was not quite two years of age when the Bavarian war broke out, and that he was in the garden with his nurse when a friend of the house, Count Schmettau, came galloping up to bid good-bye. 'He is riding off to the wars', said the nurse, and the earliest of all Fouqué's surviving memories was this of the splendid knightly officer starting away to fight the enemies of the Fatherland.

From this time forward all his dreams were of gallant deeds of arms, and all his nursery-play a long *Ritter-Epos*. From his fourth to his tenth year Fouqué spent most of his time at Sacro, a country seat of his

father's, where amiable tutors instructed him in the histories of Leonidas and Xerxes, the former not in Greek, but in the English of Glover's pompous epic. In 1788 the family moved again, this time to a house at Lentzcke, near Fehrbellin, and very soon the mother of Fouqué died. The boy himself, consumed with dreams and study, seemed feeble, and on her death-bed the mother wrung from him a reluctant promise that he would not be a soldier.

Easy to make promises, it is, but hard to keep them when they cross the instinct in the blood. Very early the boy proceeded to the university of Halle, where he gaped in envious admiration at the smart Prussian hussars clanking in the street, and longed to be one of them. An extraordinary emotion was awakened in him by a visit to the collection of antiquities in the Waisenhaus in Halle, where he saw for the first time a suit of armour and a great two-handed sword. In such weapons as these had the heroes of his day-dreams gone forth to battle for Christ against false Mahound. He could scarcely believe, he tells us, that the very body of a bold fellow had once animated this cuirass, that out of this vizier a living face had peeped. He touched the iron glove with rapture, fingered with awe the hilt of the huge broadsword. All the life of the future poet was found in little in this day's first thrilling experience at Halle—the swaggering hussars in the street, the armour and weapons of dead warriors in the museum—the whole ideal of Fouqué was resumed in a combination of these two picturesque facts. For the rest of his life his aim was to make the former as pure, as gallant, and as fabulously chivalric as had been the owners of the latter, and to gaze on the combined result with adoration.

In spite of the promise to his mother, then, the vocation of Fouqué was inevitable. At the age of seventeen he became a cornet of cuirassiers in a regiment of the Duke of Weimar's; and it was no sham soldiering, for he was immediately called upon to cross the Rhine and to fight in several engagements. Of this period of his life he gives us a lengthy, a disproportionately lengthy and sentimental account in his autobiography. Through that dim and stormy period of German history he passed an active and a happy but scarcely a significant figure. After his first campaign he went into garrison at Aschersleben, and married. This relationship, however, was a very unlucky one, and the couple soon separated. Presently, in quarters at Weimar, we find him become a poet, a vocation which he took up from sheer ebullience of martial sentiment, hoping to become the Tyrtaeus of a liberated Germany. In January 1802 he dared to apply to Goethe for a judgement on his verses, and at a picnic in Goethe's garden he was presented to Schiller. Both were markedly kind to this handsome, well-set-up young fellow; neither seems to have taken much interest in his poetry. Fouqué met Schiller again at Lauchstädt in 1803, but they did not come into close relations, and Schiller presently died.

It was friendship first with Amalie von Imhoff, and then with A. W. Schlegel and Fichte, which deepened in Fouqué the bias towards literature. He became inspired with the views and the ideas of the two latter, and Schlegel, in particular, he imitated in his earliest serious productions. At the age of twenty-seven, under the pseudonym of Pellegrin, Fouqué published at Berlin his first work, a volume of *Dramatische Spielen*, and almost immediately a second, *Romanzen vom Thale*

Ronceval, quite anonymously. The dramas were written in a certain emulation with Calderon, and attracted sufficient attention to encourage the young officer to put forth a whole series of a similar character. About the year 1805 Fouqué formed the acquaintance of Chamisso, of whom it was said that he became as fond as a Prussian cavalry officer could possibly become of a man who served in the infantry. He cooperated, certainly, with great activity, in the various literary enterprises of Chamisso and his associates, and their influence was strong upon the ultra-romantic poem of *Ritter Galmy*, which appeared in 1806. An even more curious resemblance than to any work of Chamisso's exists in the similarity of this epic to much in Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, which had been published the year before. Whether Fouqué had, or had not, read Sir Walter's poem, does not seem to be certain. Finally, to pass rapidly over the incidents of this opening period in Fouqué's literary career, he produced in 1808 a long and highly romantic novel on the opening of the Thirty Years War; this was named *Alwin*, and was the first work of Fouqué's which made him widely known. *Alwin* was welcomed and praised by Jean Paul. It showed that Fouqué had been studying the old romances of Germany, which, indeed, about this time, were his favourite reading. He felt his new chivalry deeply stimulated by these semi-mythological records of an ancient Teutonic prowess.

At this moment war broke forth again, the *Befreiungskrieg*, with all its direct and eloquent appeal to German patriotism. At first Fouqué took little or no part in actual fighting, but his enthusiasm spurred him on to increased literary activity. He wrote a vast

number of ringing martial songs, and he produced the great patriotic trilogy on Sigurd, *The Hero of the North*, which, if not really a durable work, is certainly, from an historical point of view, the most interesting of his too abundant dramatic productions. The first of these three pieces, *Sigurd the Dragon-Slayer* was published at Berlin in 1808, with, on the title-page, an engraved figure of a crested knight, in full armour, on a plunging steed, which is the very ideal of all that Fouqué himself was and wished to be. This was followed in due course by *Sigurd's Revenge* and by *Aslauga*. Heine's account of the hero is entertaining; Sigurd, he declared, is 'as strong as the rocks of Norway and as impetuous as the ocean that dashes upon them, he is as brave as a hundred lions, and has as much sense as two donkeys'. But in a soberer moment Heine confessed that he found 'great beauties' in the drama, which was favourably affected by the style of the great Danish playwright Öhlenschläger, now at the height of his career.

Recent German critics, and in particular Max Koch in his valuable study on Fouqué, have pointed out that in this Scandinavian trilogy he is vaguely and dimly, but unquestionably, leading the way for Wagner. At this time Fouqué was full of the *Nibelungenlied*, and in order to illustrate it more completely was reading Icelandic, Danish, and Swedish authorities with great assiduity. Nor did he stop here; he made this but the starting-point for the composition of other dramas, full of magnificent Teuton heroes who foreshadowed the greatness of Germany and her unbroken spirit. In these plays it seems almost certain that his zeal and fire were not equalled by his executive ability. He had little power of dramatic evolu-

tion, and no insight into character. The heroes ride through his dramas on very handsome steeds and in admirable armour, but we get little notion of their personal quality.

Absorbed by public events, and strongly preoccupied, too, by other branches of his own literary activity, Fouqué passes in his autobiography very hurriedly over the successive composition, at this time, of his four most famous tales. He evidently regarded them, as Hans Christian Andersen regarded his fairy stories, as trifling affairs, a little below his dignity, bagatelles the extreme popularity of which rather vexed than pleased him. Fouqué was now publishing a quarterly magazine for romantic literature, called *Die Jahreszeiten*, and in this appeared *Undine* in 1811, and a little later *Sintram*. The *Zauberring* was also finished, though not published, in 1811, and in 1815 appeared *Thiodulf*. These exquisite stories, then, belong to the great period of war and agitation, when the physical and mental powers of Fouqué were strung up into their very highest tension. In 1812 he led a body of volunteers, in aid of the King of Prussia, towards the relief of Breslau. In the battles of Lützen and of Bautzen he was wounded, in the course of the former being hurled from his horse into the water, and not being saved until the cold had produced a serious effect upon his constitution. He was told by the doctors that the excitement and exposure of another campaign would probably be fatal to him, and he unwillingly withdrew from active service. But the victorious issue of this campaign was a matter of infinite delight to Fouqué: he calls it the *Jubelcentrum* of his life, the point to which in advanced years he looked back with the greatest ecstasy.

The remainder of Fouqué's life is not of very great interest to the English reader of *Undine*. He wrote a great many martial songs, 'sweet lyrical humming-birds' Heine, half graciously, half sarcastically, called them. The most striking of them are contained in a little volume, called *Poems before and during the Campaign of 1813*, published in Berlin in 1814. Some of these, like the verses written on the battlefield of Görschen, and beginning

> Wer reitet so frisch und singt so hell
> Dem rühmlichen Kampf entgegen?
> Die Krieger die kenn' ich als keck und schnell,
> Vor keinem Feind noch erlegen;
> Das ist meine reitende Jägerschar,
> Die so kühn und freudig bei Görschen war,

have, in addition to the gallant lilt of the measure, a happy directness and simplicity of phrase. Fouqué's second wife, to whom he was deeply devoted, died in 1831; he married again, however, and this time the novelist Albertine Tode, who bore him two sons, and who survived him. Fouqué fell into obscurity and disfavour, but the accession of Friedrich Wilhelm IV, in 1840, promised well for his fortunes. He did not long, however, enjoy the patronage of a romantic monarch who doted on his writings. Fouqué died very suddenly, and without any premonitory symptoms of disease, on the 23rd of January 1843.

All that Fouqué directly tells us about the inception of *Undine* is that the form of the story was suggested to him by a passage in Theophrastus Paracelsus. But Goethe had already personified the four primary elements as Salamander, Undine, Sylphe, and Kobold. The tale of Fouqué is, therefore, a realization of the second of these, the element of water, and its

relations with the myths of Melusine and of Lohengrin have been pointed out by the German critics. That Fouqué's *Undine* was the book which Richard Wagner was reading on the latest evening of his life has often been recorded, and shows the sympathy of the great musician for his romantic predecessor.

The success which *Undine* met with from the moment of its publication was extraordinary. Goethe, who found little to commend in the other writings of Fouqué, praised this warmly to Eckermann and to Holtei. He said that poor Fouqué had on this one occasion struck pure gold, and his only misfortune was that all the rest of his life he could not understand why people did not take his ordinary copper for the same gold. Heine, always so penetrating in the independence of his criticism, became entirely enthusiastic about this one work of Fouqué's, and called *Undine* a 'wonderfully lovely poem. It is a very kiss; the Genius of Poesy kissed the sleeping Spring, and he opened his eyelids with a smile, and all the roses breathed out perfume, and all the nightingales sang—this is what our excellent Fouqué clothed in words and called *Undine*.' The tale went on increasing the circle of its admirers, and before Fouqué died he had received it in English, French, Italian, and Russian translations.

It was from Novalis that Fouqué received the idea of a Christendom united and vivified by a fresh age of chivalry. This was a familiar aspiration among the later German romanticists, but with most of them it brought with it a tendency to Catholicism, and that of a strongly marked order. Fouqué's peculiarity was to combine his military chivalry with the sternest Protestantism. One special characteristic of his is the unselfish and even quixotic devotion to woman which

he inculcates, often very sweetly and gracefully. He was, in fact, a gallant but puritanical Berlin cavalry-officer, tinctured with the peculiar chevalieresque sentiment of the close of the eighteenth century, and penetrated with a sentiment of his divine mission. Friends, like Perthes, privately found him narrow and tiresome, and complained that to be a pleasant companion one should sometimes be a grown-up human being, and not invariably a combination of poet, child, and man-in-armour. Where as a writer he was most successful was in those tales in which he was the natural successor of the author of *Amadis de Gaule*, and of the French writers of sentimental heroic romance in the seventeenth century. No element of humour, no smallest suspicion of the ridiculous, interfered with his perfect contentment in the composition of tales in which men and women of heroic mould, magnificently habited, were gently interfered with by supernatural beings and elemental influences. These stories were often instinct with beauty, and, of them all, *Undine* is certainly the most delightful.

EDMUND GOSSE.

UNDINE

CHAPTER I

HOW THE KNIGHT CAME TO THE FISHERMAN

HUNDREDS of years ago, one beautiful evening, a good old man, who was a fisherman, was sitting at his door and was mending his nets. He lived, you must know, at a very charming spot. The green turf on which his cottage was built stretched far out into a great lake, and, while it seemed that this tongue of land must have been drawn forth by love of the clear blue, brilliant water, so also it might be thought that the lake too had grasped at the lovely meadow with an amorous arm, at its tall tremulous grasses, and at the refreshing shadows of its trees. Each went as a guest to the other, and that was the very reason why each was so beautiful. Save the fisherman and his family, however, few or no human beings were ever to be met with in this lovely place. For behind the tongue of land there lay a very wild forest, so dark and so impassable, so full of weird creatures and strange apparitions, that most folks must be driven by great necessity before they would adventure within it. The aged, pious fisherman, however, would cross it again and again with a light heart, when he had occasion to carry the fine fish which he caught from his lovely tongue of land to a certain great city which lay not far behind the great forest. It was, moreover, made easy for him to pass through the woodland, because he harboured none but pious thoughts, and because it was his habit, whenever the evil shadows clustered round him, to break out into singing of a holy psalm with clear throat and upright heart.

So, as he sat this evening, quite innocently by his

nets, it was with unpremeditated alarm that he caught in the darkness of the forest the rustling sound as of a man on horseback, and heard this noise come ever nearer to the tongue of land. All that on many a stormy night he had dreamed of the secrets of the forest came back to him now, and above all the image of a snow-white man, of gigantic stature, who never ceased to nod in a horrible way with his head. Ah! as he lifted his eyes to the forest, it seemed to him that even at this moment, through the screen of foliage, he saw the nodding man advancing. However, he soon pulled himself together, reminding himself that never in the forest had he met with any adventure, and that, in any case, on the green tongue of land the evil spirit, doubtless, would have less power over him. At the same time, in a loud voice, and out of his heart, he repeated, as in prayer, a text of Scripture, whereupon his courage returned to him, and, almost smiling, he perceived into what strange error he had fallen. The white, nodding man had suddenly become a little brook, long familiar to him, which came foaming out of the forest and poured its waters into the lake. But what had caused the rustling sound was a handsome knight, richly adorned, who now came riding on horseback towards the cottage, through the shadows of the trees. A mantle of scarlet hung down over his violet-blue doublet, embroidered with gold; out of his gold-coloured cap sprang plumes of red and of violet blue; in his golden baldric blazed an extremely beautiful and richly damasked sword. The white charger which carried the knight was slighter of build than is common among steeds of war, and stepped so lightly over the greensward that his hoofs seemed to leave no impression on this delicate carpet of verdure.

Not yet, however, had the aged fisherman wholly taken heart again, although he thought that he perceived that from one of so noble a mien no evil dealing was to be dreaded; so that he very modestly greeted the seigneur as he approached, and remained standing by his nets. Then the knight stopped still, and asked whether he and his horse might be sheltered and tended there that night.

'As far as your horse is concerned, dear sir,' replied the fisherman, 'I know of no better stable to guide him to than this sheltered meadow, and no better fodder than the grass that grows thereon. But I will gladly entertain yourself with supper and a bed, the best that my poor little house can offer.'

The knight was well content with this reply. He dismounted from his steed, whom they jointly ungirthed and unbridled, and then he let him wander at will on the flowery pasture, saying to his host:

'Had I found you less hospitable and less genial, my dear old fisherman, yet would you not to-day have been free of my presence, since, as I perceive, before us lies a broad lake, and the dear God preserve me from having to ride back again at shut of eve through that strange woodland of yours.'

'We will not so much as speak of it,' said the fisherman, and with that he led his guest into the cottage.

There, by the hearth, from which a scanty fire lighted up the clean twilit room, the fisherman's aged wife was sitting in a large chair. When this distinguished guest entered, she rose to her feet with an amiable gesture of welcome, but sank again into her seat of honour, without offering it to the stranger. Upon which the fisherman said, with a smile:

'Take it not ill, young sir, that she has not given up to you the most comfortable chair in the house: such is the way among poor folks—it is the exclusive right of age to keep "the best place".'

'Eh, husband,' said the wife with a quiet smile, 'what are you thinking of? Our guest belongs to the family of Christ, and how should dear young blood dream of hunting old folks out of their places? Be seated, my young sir,' she went on, turning to the knight; 'yonder stands a very nice little chair, only you must not fidget about upon it too much, for one of its legs is not so strong as it once was.'

The knight took hold of the stool with care, and sat down pleasantly upon it. It seemed to him as though he became one of this little household, and even as though, from some far journey, he had come back home to it.

Then these three good folk began, in all friendly familiarity, to chat to one another. Of the forest, a subject to which the knight again and again returned, the old man would not confess that he knew much. He considered, at least, that nightfall was no time for such talk. But of their manner of keeping house and of their doings the old couple were ready enough to talk, and glad too to listen when the knight told them of his travels, and that he had a castle at the source of the Danube, and that Lord Huldbrand of Ringstetten was his name. While this talk was going on, now and again the stranger noticed a noise at the bottom of the little window, as though some one were splashing water at it. The old man knitted his brows whenever he heard this sound, but when at length a whole stream gushed against the pane, and through the ill-fitting window-frame spluttered into the room,

he rose indignantly, and in a menacing voice cried out through the window—

'Undine! Have done with these childish tricks. Don't you know that a strange gentleman is here with us in the cottage?'

Then there was silence outside, save that a little noise of tittering could be perceived, and the fisherman said, returning:

'I am afraid you will have to excuse her, my honoured guest, for this and perhaps for other instances of bad behaviour, but she means no harm by it. I must explain that she is our foster-daughter Undine, and that she cannot cure herself of these childish ways, although she has already reached her eighteenth year. However, as I was saying, she is a very good girl at heart.'

'Ah! you may say so,' broke in the old woman, shaking her head. 'When you come home from catching fish or from an excursion, you think that her little gambols are vastly pretty. But to have them going on all day long, and never a word of sense, and, as she grows up and ought to be a help in the house, only to have to be always taking pains to prevent her tricks from being the ruin of us—that is quite another affair, and it would try the patience of a saint.'

'Well, well!' smiled the good man, 'your trial is Undine, and mine is the lake. Though it often breaks through my wears and my nets, yet am I very fond of it, and you, with all your worry and anxiety love this pretty child of ours. Is it not true?'

'One cannot contrive to be very cross with her,' acknowledged the old woman, with a smile.

The door then flew open, and a fair child of marvellous beauty slipped in, laughing, and said:

'You were only joking, father? Where is this guest of yours?'

But at the same moment she perceived the knight, and stopped to gaze in wonder at the handsome youth. Huldbrand feasted his eyes on the lovely vision, and tried to form a clear impression of her charming features, for he thought that it was her surprise alone which gave him the time to do so, and that in another moment she would disappear in a freak of bashfulness. But it was not so. For when she had gazed upon him for quite a long time, she came confidently nearer, kneeled down before him, and said, playing the while with a token of gold which hung by a rich chain on his breast:

'Oh, you beautiful, you gentle guest, how is it that you have come at last into our poor cottage? For years and years you must have wandered round the world before you found us! Is it from the wild woodland that you come, O beautiful friend?'

The old woman, reproving her, left him no time for reply. She desired her to stand up, like a modest girl, and to be about her work. Without answering her, however, Undine brought a little footstool close to Huldbrand's seat, sat down upon it with her sewing, and said in a pleasant tone of voice:

'I will do my work here.'

The old man did what parents usually do with spoiled children: he pretended not to have noticed Undine's disobedience, and began to talk of something else. But the girl would not allow that. She said:

'I have asked our dear guest whence he comes, and he has not answered.'

'Out of the forest I come, you lovely little vision,' replied Huldbrand; and she continued:

'Then you must tell me how you came to enter the

forest, for most folk dread to go there, and you must recount what strange adventures befell you in it, for none pass through it without adventures.'

Huldbrand was conscious of a little shudder at this reminder, and involuntarily he glanced at the window, for he fancied that one of the horrible shapes that had met him in the forest might be grinning in at him. But he saw nothing, save the deep black night, that had by now closed up the window-pane. Then he drew himself together, and was going to begin the story of his adventures, when the old man interrupted him with these words:

'Not so, Sir Knight! This is no hour to tell such tales as these.'

But Undine leaped in anger from her stool, set her beautiful arms akimbo, and shouted out, standing right in front of the fisherman:

'He is not to tell his story, father? He is not? But I choose that he shall do so! And do so he shall!'

And thereupon, with her pretty little foot, she stamped upon the ground, but all with a pose so droll and graceful that Huldbrand could almost be less persuaded to take his eyes off her now she was angry than a while ago when she was so gentle. But the disapproval which had been smouldering in the old man now broke out in flame. He loudly reproved Undine for her disobedience and her rude behaviour in the presence of the visitor; and the good old wife joined in. Then Undine said:

'If you are going to scold me, and do nothing as I wish it done, then sleep by yourselves in your smoky old cottage!'

And like an arrow she shot out of the door and vanished into the darkness of the night.

CHAPTER II

HOW UNDINE HAD COME TO THE FISHERMAN

HULDBRAND and the fisherman leaped from their seats and prepared to pursue the angry girl. But before they reached the door of the cottage Undine had already long disappeared into the misty darkness outside, and no sound of her light footsteps betrayed the direction in which she had taken flight. Huldbrand looked inquiringly at his host. He was almost persuaded that the exquisite vision, which had so suddenly melted into the night, could be none other than a continuation of the strange apparitions which, earlier in the day, had made their wanton sport with him in the forest; but the old man muttered in his beard that it was not the first time that she had tricked them thus. But it meant an aching heart and sleepless eyes all the night long, for who could tell what harm might not befall her, out there in the darkness alone until the dawn?

'Then, in God's name, my father,' said Huldbrand in an agony, 'let us go after her!'

The old man answered, 'And whither? It would be a crime in me to let you pursue this mad maiden alone in darkness and in solitude, and my aged limbs could not overtake the hoyden, even if one knew whither she had betaken herself.'

'But, at all events, we must shout after her, and beg her to return,' said Huldbrand, and with that he began to call as loudly as he could, 'Undine! Oh, Undine! Do come back!'

The old man shook his head; he told the knight that there was no use in calling, and that he did not realize yet how froward the child was. But for all that

he could not help shouting and shouting through the blackness of the night, 'Undine! Ah! dear Undine! I beg of you, only once more, come back to us!'

But it befell, as the fisherman had said it would, no Undine could be seen or heard, and as the old man absolutely refused to allow Huldbrand to attempt to follow the fugitive they were at last obliged to go back into the cottage. They found the fire there on the hearth almost extinguished, and the goodwife, who seemed to regard the flight and peril of Undine by no means so seriously as her husband did, was already gone to bed. The old man drew the embers together, laid dry wood upon them, and by the light of the reviving flames discovered a tankard with wine in it, which he set between himself and his guest.

'You are still anxious about that tiresome girl, Sir Knight, and we may as well steal away a part of the night in gossiping and drinking as toss on our reed-mats in the vain pursuit of sleep. Is it not so?'

Huldbrand was easily persuaded, and, as the housewife had now gone to rest, the fisherman placed him in her empty seat of honour. The men chatted and drank in the temper natural to two brave and honest fellows. To be sure, every time there was the least sound outside the window, and even sometimes when there was no sound at all, they would glance up, both of them, and say, 'She 's coming!'

Then they would be perfectly still for a moment or two, and then, finding that nothing happened, after shaking their heads and sighing, they would go on talking as before.

But as neither of them, really, could settle his thoughts to any other subject than Undine, the most natural thing seemed to be for the knight to listen to

how Undine in the first instance came to the fisherman, and for the old fisherman to tell that tale. And this was the way he told it:

'Fifteen years and more have gone by since, once upon a time, I was travelling through the forest with my wares, bound for the city. My wife had stayed at home, as usual; and at that time there was another and a fair cause why she should, for God had been gracious enough at our somewhat advanced age to bestow upon us a little child of wonderful beauty. It was a little maiden, and we were just discussing whether, for the benefit of this new visitor, we ought not to abandon our lovely tongue of land, and to transfer God's dear gift to some place where she might the better thrive. But poor folks cannot act so freely as you, Sir Knight, might fancy; nay, by the dear God, one can but do what one can. Well, this matter kept running in my head, and as I passed through the roar and rattle of the city, and thought of this tongue of land that was so dear to me, I kept repeating, "This is the riot in the midst of which my next home will have to be made, or, at least, in some place not much less noisy". Nevertheless, I murmured not against the ways of God, but the more raised up my heart to Him in silent thankfulness for the new-born babe. I should, too, be telling a lie if I were to say that, either in going or in returning through the forest, anything more remarkable than usual happened to me, for I have never seen anything uncanny there. The Lord was ever with me through the strange shadows.'

So saying, he lifted his cap from his bald head, and remained awhile buried in thoughts of prayer. Then he covered his brows again, and went on:

'It was upon this side of the forest, ay, upon this

side, that sorrow came to meet me. My wife came with her eyes streaming like two waterfalls; she had put on mourning garments.

'"Oh, dear God," I moaned, "where is our beloved child? Tell me!"

'"With Him on whose name you are calling, dear husband," she answered, and silently weeping we passed together into the cottage. I searched for the little body, and then I learned what had happened. My wife had been sitting by the shore of the lake with the child, and as she played with it without a care or thought, suddenly the little thing bent forward, just as though she saw some lovely object in the water; my wife saw her laughing, the sweet angel, and grasping with her little hand; but next moment, with a sudden movement, she had leaped out of her arms and into the mirror of the lake. I searched and searched for the little dead body, but nothing was to be seen, and no trace of her was ever found.

'Well, the same evening, we two desolate parents were sitting silently in the cottage; we had no wish to talk, even if we could have done so for our tears. We sat gazing into the flame upon the hearth. Then there came a noise of something rattling at the door: it opened, and a marvellously lovely little maid of three or four years of age stood, in a rich dress, on the threshold, and smiled at us. We were stricken quite dumb with astonishment, and at first I could not be sure whether it was a real little human being or merely a delusive vision. Then I perceived that water was dripping from the golden hair and the rich raiment, and saw that the lovely child had fallen into the water, and needed help.

'"Wife," I said, "no one could have saved our

dear child; but at least we will do to others what it would have made us blessed upon earth if others could have done to us."

'We took the child in, put her to bed, and gave her heating drink. All this while she said not a word, and merely gazed steadily at us out of the sea-blue twin heavens of her eyes. Next morning it proved that she had caught no chill, and I asked her who her parents were and whence she came to us. But she told a strange, bewildered story. She had come from some distant place, for, during the fifteen years that have since elapsed, not a trace of her past life have I been able to discover. Besides, every now and then she talks of things so extraordinary that sometimes you would fancy she must have fallen from the moon. She prattles about golden castles, with crystal roofs, and God knows what else. But the clearest part of her story used to be that with her mother she had gone out upon the great lake, and had fallen overboard out of the boat, and remembered nothing more till she found herself under the trees, and felt quite happy on the pleasant shore.

'But now great hesitation and anxiety invaded our hearts. That we should keep the new-found child in the place of the darling who had been drowned was very easily decided. But who could tell whether the little one had been baptized or not? She herself could throw no light on the question. That she was a being created for the glory and joy of God, that indeed she knew, and told us so over and over again, and she was ready to let us do with her whatever should be for the glory and joy of God. This is how my wife and I reasoned about the matter. If she has never been baptized, then why should we delay to do it? but if she

has, there is more harm in too little than in too much of a good thing. And then we set about searching for a good name for the child, since as yet we knew not really how to address her. At last we determined that Dorothea was the name to suit her best, since I once heard tell that that name means God's gift, and truly God had sent her as a gift to us, to comfort us in our sorrow. But she would not hear of it, and she insisted that Undine was what her parents had called her, and that Undine should continue to be her name. Now that seemed to me to be a heathenish name, that is to be found in no list of saints' days, and so I went and consulted a priest in the city. He would not hear of such a name as Undine, and when I had begged him many times to do so he consented to come with me through the dreadful forest and christen the child here in my cottage. She stood so prettily dressed, and with so sweet an expression, that the priest's whole heart went out to her, and she contrived so cleverly to flatter him, and at the same time so roguishly to defy him, that one by one he forgot all the good reasons that he had raised against the name Undine. So the end of it was that she was baptized Undine, and all through the holy office behaved in a way that was extraordinarily good and gentle, wild and fickle though she usually was. For my wife was right, we have terrible things to put up with! If I were only to tell you——'

But here the knight interrupted the fisherman, to draw his attention to a sound, as of a roaring stream of waters, which he had perceived for some time past while the old man was talking, and which now seemed to be close outside the window of the cottage. Both leaped to the door. There they saw, by the light of the

newly risen moon, that the rivulet which ran down out of the forest had far outstepped its banks, and was carrying down with it stones and logs of wood in its whirling eddies. The storm broke, as if awakened by the roar of it, out of the huge clouds which hurried along across the face of the moon; the lake was howling under the lashing wings of the wind; the trees on the tongue of land were moaning from their root to their topmost twig, and bowed as if the whirling waters made them giddy.

'Undine! Undine! for the love of God, Undine!' shouted the two men in their anxiety. But no answer came there back to them, and all distracted they rushed forth from the cottage, the one in this direction and the other in that.

CHAPTER III

HOW THEY FOUND UNDINE

HULDBRAND became more and more anxious and distressed, the longer they were searching, and searching all in vain, under the shadow of the night. The thought that Undine might after all be no more than a mere apparition of the forest came over him with fresh force; indeed, as the waves and the winds kept howling, as the trees crashed, the whole tongue of land, lately so pleasant in its sense of repose, and the cottage, and its inhabitants, all seemed a mere mocking illusion, deceptive to the senses. Yet, at a distance, he could still hear the anxious voice of the fisherman, crying to Undine, the loud prayers and hymns of the old housewife sounding through the roar of the elements. At last he came close to the banks of the swollen torrent,

and saw in the moonlight that it had come rushing down across the edge of the monstrous forest in such a way as to turn the point of land into an island.

'Dear God,' he thought to himself, 'what if Undine should have ventured ever so short a distance into the fearful woodland—perhaps in her charming waywardness, just because I would not tell her what I had seen there—and then the torrent have swept between us, and she, perhaps, at this very moment, be weeping there among the phantoms!' A scream of horror escaped him, and he climbed across the intervening stones and torn-up pine-trees, that he might reach the rushing stream, and, wading or swimming, might search beyond it for the fugitive. There came back to him in memory all the terrible and wonderful things that had befallen him by daylight under the boughs that now were murmuring and howling. In particular, it seemed to him that a tall white man, whose figure he recognized all too well, was grinning and nodding at him on the farther bank; yet even these horrid visions led him the more passionately onward, for he told himself that it was beneath their gloom that Undine now was lying, alone, in the shadow of death.

He had already seized a sturdy pine-branch, and was standing, supported by it, in the whirling torrent, against which he could scarcely hold his way, but into which he was boldly pushing forwards, when a sweet voice rang out close to him, 'Take care! take care! The old stream is spiteful!'

He recognized these beloved sounds; he paused as if dazed under the shadows which had now obscured the moon, and at the same moment the water rose to his thighs. But he would not turn back.

'If you are not really there, and if only, like a will-

o'-the-wisp, your shade is dancing round me, then I too choose to live no longer, but will be a shade as you are—oh, my dear, dear Undine.'

These words he shouted and pushed still farther into the torrent.

'Look round—ah! look round, you handsome, infatuated youth!' called a voice close beside him, and, glancing sideways, he saw, by the light of the moon, which was now clear again, under the boughs of the tall, interlacing trees, on a little island formed by the flood, Undine, who was smiling and prettily crouching in the flowery grass.

Ah! how much more gaily now than before the young man wielded his pine-branch as a staff! A few steps carried him through the torrent which raged between him and the maiden, and then he was standing beside her on the little plot of turf so genially and so securely overshadowed by the ancient trees. Undine now had raised herself a little, and underneath her tent of leafage she wound her arms about his neck, until she drew him down beside her on the yielding grass.

'Here you shall tell me your story, my charming friend,' she said, whispering lightly; 'here those disagreeable old folks cannot listen to what we say. And surely this our roof of foliage is quite as good as their wretched cottage?'

'It is heaven itself!' said Huldbrand, and, kissing the lovely flattering creature, he pressed her to his heart.

But by this time the old fisherman had reached the bank of the torrent, and shouted across to the two young people:

'Ah, Sir Knight! I treated you as one honest fellow treats another, and there you are amusing yourself

with my foster-child, and letting me run up and down in the darkness, half crazy with anxiety.'

'I have only just found her myself, old father,' shouted back the knight.

'So much the better,' said the fisherman; 'but now, without any more delay, bring her over here to me to firm land.'

But of that Undine would not hear. She thought it would be merrier to pass right within the wild woodland with the handsome stranger than to go back to the cottage, where no one would do what she wished, and whence the fair knight himself sooner or later must take his departure. Throwing her arms round Huldbrand, she sang with an indescribable charm:

The stream danced down through copse and brake
To seek a happy shore;
It reached at last the boundless lake,
And dances now no more.

The old fisherman wept bitterly at this her song, but she seemed scarcely moved by his tears. She kissed and cajoled her favourite, who said to her at last:

'Undine, if that old man's grief does not touch your heart, it touches mine. We must go back to him.'

Her great blue eyes gazed at him in astonishment, and then at last she said, slowly and falteringly:

'If you think we must—well! Whatever you think right is right for me. But first of all that old man up there must promise that he will not try to prevent you from telling me what you saw in the forest, and—that's all I care about.'

'Come, then, come!' shouted the fisherman to her. 'Come without wasting more words out here.'

At the same time he stretched his arms far out towards her over the torrent, and nodded with his

head, as much as to say that he agreed to her conditions. At this his white locks fell in a strange confusion over his face, and Huldbrand could not but be reminded of the nodding white man in the woodland. But, without troubling about that, the young knight grasped Undine in his arms and bore her across the little space of waters flowing between their islet and firm ground. The old man fell upon Undine's neck, and could not have done with kissing and petting her, and the old wife came too, and she embraced the prodigal most affectionately. Not another word of reproof was uttered, and the less because Undine, forgetting all her naughtiness, almost overwhelmed the two foster-parents with kind words and caresses.

But while the delights of repossession were still filling their hearts, the dawn began to glimmer over the lake; the storm had by this time worn itself out, and the little birds were singing lustily on the wet branches. And as Undine still insisted that the knight should keep his promise and should tell his tale, the old folks, smiling and assenting, yielded to her wish. Breakfast was spread under the trees which stood close to the lake, behind the cottage, and they sat down to it with a light heart—Undine on the grass at the feet of the knight, for she would sit nowhere else. And then Huldbrand began to speak as follows:

CHAPTER IV

OF WHAT BEFELL THE KNIGHT IN THE FOREST

'It must be some eight days since I rode into that free city of the Empire which lies out there beyond the forest. I had scarce arrived when there was a fair

gathering for the tourney and running at the ring, wherein I spared neither my steed nor my lance. One day, as I was standing quietly at the lists, resting after that sprightly toil, and was handing my helmet back to one of my squires, I suddenly perceived the figure of an exquisite woman who stood in magnificent attire on one of the balconies and gazed at me. I asked my neighbour who she was, and was told that the lovely maiden's name was Bertalda, and that she was the foster-daughter of one of the great dukes who live in these parts. I noticed that she continued to look steadily at me, and, as is the mode with us young knights, if I had ridden smartly before, now I put all my heart into my play. At the ball that evening it chanced that I was Bertalda's partner, and so it continued as long as the festival lasted.'

At this moment a sharp pain in his left hand, which happened to be hanging down, interrupted Huldbrand's narrative. He turned to look at the place where he was hurt. Undine had set her pearly teeth hard in his finger, and looked thoroughly angry and spiteful. But in another instant she was gazing affectionately up into his eyes, and was softly whispering—

'It is your own fault!'

Then she hid her face, and the knight, much astonished and a little embarrassed, continued his story:

'This Bertalda is a proud, strange girl. On the second day she did not attract me so much as on the day before, and on the third day she pleased me still less. But I kept with her, because she was more friendly to me than to any other knight, and at length in jest I prayed her for one of her gloves.

' "When you bring me news, having been there

quite alone, of what our famous forest looks like, I will give you one," she said.

'I cared not much to gain her glove, but a word is a word, and no honourable knight will let himself be called on twice to undertake such an adventure.'

'I think she loved you,' Undine interrupted.

'It did look like it,' admitted Huldbrand.

'Well,' cried the maiden, laughing, 'she must be a fool to send away the man she loves. And into a dangerous forest, too! I would have let the forest keep its secret long enough before I did so.'

'It was yesterday morning that I started,' continued the knight, smiling kindly at Undine. 'The stems of the trees looked so red and slim in the morning light, the green turf was so brilliant in it, the leaves were whispering so gaily to one another, that in my heart I laughed at the folks who could imagine that anything uncanny would happen in so sweet a place. We shall soon have trotted through this woodland and back again, I said to myself in a merry mood, and before I had given it another thought I was deep in the green shadows, and could see no more of the open country that lay behind me. Then for the first time it occurred to me that I might very well go astray in the mighty forest, and that this perhaps was the one danger that threatened a man who crossed it. I paused, therefore, and looked round to see the position of the sun, which had meanwhile risen somewhat higher. As I did so I became aware of a black object on the bough of a lofty oak-tree. I thought it was a bear, and I was feeling for my blade, when it said, with a human voice, but in a very rough and hateful way:

' "If I did not nibble off the twigs up here, where

would you be roasted at midnight to-night, Mr. Impudence?"

'And then it grinned and made such a rustling in the branches that my steed grew restive and galloped away with me, before I had time really to see what kind of a devil's beast it was.'

'Oh, don't say that,' said the old fisherman, and crossed himself; the housewife did the same in silence. Undine looked at her beloved with bright eyes, and said, 'The best of the story is that they have not really roasted him. Go on, you lovely youth!'

The knight continued his narrative:

'My frightened horse carried me swiftly past stems of trees and branches; it was wet with fright and heat, and still could not be prevailed upon to stop. At last it made straight for a chasm in the rocks. Then it suddenly seemed to me that a tall white man threw himself in front of the maddened steed, and so startled it that it stood still. I mastered it again, and then for the first time I perceived that what had saved me was no white man, but the silvery brightness of a cascade, pouring down from a hillside in such a way that my horse's path was crossed and hemmed in by it.'

'Thanks, dear cascade!' cried Undine, clapping her hands together. But the old man, shaking his head, looked down moodily in front of him.

'I had scarcely set myself straight again in the saddle, and got proper hold of the reins,' Huldbrand continued, 'when there rose up at my side a strange little man, dwarf, and ugly beyond measure, all brownish yellow, and with a nose that was no smaller than the rest of him put together. He grinned with a smile of idiotic politeness on his broad slit of a

mouth, and made a thousand scrapes and bows at me. As this buffoonery displeased me very much, I thanked him quite curtly, turned round my still trembling steed, and thought that I would undertake some other adventure, or, if I found none, that I would make my way home, since during my wild ride the sun had passed the meridian and was now sinking to the west. But suddenly, with a turn like a flash of lightning, the little fellow was standing again in front of my horse.

'"Out of that!" I said fretfully. "The brute is fresh, and may easily knock you over."

'"Ah!" snarled the dwarf, and laughed more like an idiot than ever. "Give me some money, for I stopped your little horse; if it had not been for me, you and your little horse would be sprawling down there in the chasm. Hu!"

'"Don't make any more faces at me, and take your money, liar that you are, for, look you, it was the good-natured waterfall there that saved me, not you, you pitiful little sprite!" And so saying I let a piece of gold drop into his queer cap, which he was holding out at me like a beggar. Then I pushed on; but he screamed behind me, and was suddenly running at my side with a speed that was incredible. I put my horse to a gallop; but he galloped beside us, hard work as it must have been for him, and all his body seemed out of joint in strange dislocations, half ludicrous, half hideous. All the time he held my gold coin high in the air, and with every leap he made in galloping he shrieked: "Base money! base coin! base coin! base money!" and yelled it out so from his hollow chest that you would have thought at each scream he must have fallen dead. And his hideous red tongue lolled

far out of his throat. I stopped in agitation; I asked him what he meant by screaming so. "Take another piece of gold," I said: "take two, but get you gone."

'Then again he began his ugly, civil reverences, and snarled: "But not gold, it shall not be gold, my little gentleman; I have but too much of that trash of my own; wait, till I show you."

'And then it suddenly seemed to me that I could look right through the green, firm sod, as if it had been green glass, and the flat earth as round as a bullet, and that I could see within it a multitude of cobolds sporting with silver and gold. Head over heels they rolled about, struck one another with the precious metal, and blew gold-dust playfully into each others' faces. My ugly companion stood half in, half out; he made the others reach him heaps and heaps of gold, and showed it to me, laughing, then flung it back again to ring down the sides of the unfathomable abyss. Then, once more, he showed the gold coin that I had given him to the cobolds below, and, half dead with laughter, they craned up to hiss me. Finally, they all pushed out at me their pointed fingers, stained with ore, and wilder and wilder, and louder and louder, and crazier and crazier, the crowd of them climbed up to me; then was I seized with horror, as my steed had been before me. I put both spurs into him, and for a second time I was whirled in a mad gallop through the woodland.

'When at last I halted again, the cool of the evening was about me. Through the branches I saw a white footpath glimmer, which made me think that this must be the road back to the city through the forest. I began to work in that direction; but a dim visage, perfectly white, with features that were always changing,

peered at me between the leaves. I tried to escape from it, but wherever I went it met me. At last I determined in anger that I would make my steed go straight for it, but then it dashed a white foam over me and the horse, so that we veered about bewildered. It drove us on step by step, always keeping us down the footway, and leaving our path clear in one single direction only. When we took this route, it kept close behind us, but did us no manner of harm. When, after a while, I glanced around me, I perceived that the white foaming face rose on an equally white and most gigantic body. I thought again and again that it must be a wandering waterspout, but I never could be perfectly sure about it. Wearily both the steed and his rider yielded to the white man that drove us on, and all the while he nodded with his head, as much as to say, "Quite right! quite right!" And so at last out we came at the end of the woodland, where I saw greensward and the waters of a lake, and your little cottage, and where the tall white man vanished.'

'Ah! well to be out of it!' said the old fisherman, and then he began to discuss the best way in which his guest could get back again to his friends in the city. But at that moment Undine was heard giggling softly to herself. Huldbrand noticed it, and said:

'I thought you were glad to see me yesterday? Why are you so pleased to hear us talk of my going away again?'

'Because you cannot do it,' replied Undine. 'Just you try to cross the swollen torrent with a punt or with a horse or by yourself, whichever you like best. Or, rather, do not try at all, for you will only be dashed to pieces by the stems and stones that are driven down it as swift as a shot. And, so far as the

lake is concerned, I know father cannot take you far enough in his punt.'

Huldbrand rose, with a laugh, to see if what Undine said was really a fact; the old man accompanied him, and Undine went flitting roguishly beside the two men. They found that what Undine had said was true, and the knight was constrained to make up his mind to stay on the island, into which the point of land had been turned, until the flood should have subsided. When, after their expedition, the three had returned to the cottage, the knight whispered in the child's ear:

'Well, how is it, little Undine? Are you vexed that I have to stay?'

'Ah!' she replied sulkily, 'don't talk like that. Who knows, if I had not bitten you, how much more about Bertalda there might not have been in your story!'

CHAPTER V

HOW THE KNIGHT LIVED BY THE LAKE

PERHAPS, my dear reader, it may have befallen you, after much beating hither and thither in the world, to reach at last a spot where you were contented to stay. That longing to be at peace at one's own fireside, which is inborn in every one of us, was once more awakened in you; you thought that home, with all the bloom of childhood and purest, most fervent love, would blossom forth again from precious places of burial, and that here it must be well to take up your abode and build. That you erred in so dreaming, and that you had afterwards in bitterness to expiate your error, is not to the point, and you do not want to be

troubled with a memory of that harsh aftertaste. But call back to you each inexpressibly rapturous anticipation, each angelic greeting of peace, and you will almost realize what the knight Huldbrand experienced while he sojourned on the point of land that ran out into the lake.

Often, with secret satisfaction, he would notice that every day the forest torrent ran on with a wilder flood, as though its bed grew broader and broader, and so promised to extend still further his isolation on the islet. Part of the day, however, he wandered about with an old cross-bow, which he had found in a corner of the cottage and had furbished up, watching for the birds which flew over his head, and, when he could manage to hit them, carrying them back to the kitchen to be roasted. If he brought such booty with him, Undine scarcely ever failed to scold him for so wickedly robbing the dear creatures of the air, sailing up there in the sea of azure, of their innocent lives; she would even burst into bitter tears when she saw the dead birds. But if he came back home and had shot nothing, she scolded him none the less, that through his negligence and want of skill they were obliged to put up with fish and shrimps for dinner. Her fantastic anger always gave him the most exquisite pleasure, the more so as she was almost sure, after an outburst of petulance, to lavish delicate caresses upon him. The old folks had come to an understanding about the intimacy of the young couple: they treated them like lovers betrothed, or rather like a pair of married people, who, to help them in their advanced age, had come to the island to live with them. This sequestered existence made the young Huldbrand almost fancy that he was already

Undine's bridegroom. He had the illusion that no world existed on the other side of the encircling torrent, and that it was quite vain to imagine that he should ever mix any more with his fellow-men; and if now and again he heard his grazing horse neigh to him, as if rousing him and calling him to knightly deeds, or if his scutcheon flashed out upon him from the midst of the embroidery of the saddle and the caparison, or if his beautiful sword all unawares fell from the nail from which it dangled in the cottage, gliding with a shock out of the scabbard, he quieted his dubious thoughts by saying: 'Undine is no fisherman's daughter, but without doubt, and according to all probability, was born the scion of some mysterious princely house in a country far away.'

And now it grew odious to him to hear the old wife scold Undine in his presence. The roguish maiden had no scruple in openly laughing these reproofs to scorn, but it made him feel as though his wife were being attacked; and yet he could not blame the old woman, for Undine always deserved at least ten times as much scolding as she got. So the end of it would be that he would remain just as fond as ever of the housewife, and would take up again the pleasant peaceful tenor of his life.

At last, however, his quiet of mind was disturbed. It was the habit of the fisherman and the knight, at dinner, and at supper too, if the wind howled outside, as it almost always did at nightfall, to regale one another with a mug of wine. But by this time they had exhausted the whole store which the fisherman had in one journey after another brought from the city, and the two men quite lost their temper about it. Undine made the roof ring with her laughter, but

neither of the men joined in her fun with their usual gaiety. When evening was drawing in she left the cottage. She said she was weary of looking at two such long-drawn, tiresome faces. As the weather seemed settling down to storm in the twilight, and as the waves were already howling and dashing, the knight and the fisherman sprang in terror to the door, in order to prevent Undine from going out, for they recollected their agony on the first night which Huldbrand spent at the cottage. But Undine faced them, clapping her hands together with a pretty gesture.

'What will you give me, if I bring you some wine? Or rather, you need not give me anything,' she proceeded, 'for I shall be amply repaid if it makes you more amusing company than you have been today. You may come with me. The forest torrent has thrown up a cask on the bank, and you may condemn me to go to sleep for a whole week, if it is not a wine-cask.'

The men followed her, and they really did find, in a creek of the bank that was hemmed in by bushes, a cask which roused their hopes: it certainly looked as though it might contain the noble liquor that they longed for. They all rolled it to the cottage as fast as they could, for there were signals of bad weather coming in the evening sky, while the breakers on the lake tossed their white heads foaming, as if they were peering up at the rain that was so soon to pour down upon them. Undine gave the men what help she could, and when the rain suddenly began to burst from the heavy clouds she looked up into the sky and said:

'Take care that you do not wet us: we shall not be safe under a roof for a long time yet.'

The old man reproved her for addressing the elements in so presumptuous a tone, but she giggled softly to herself, and certainly no one seemed any the worse for it. Oddly enough, they all three managed to reach the pleasant hearth without getting wet, and it was only when the cask had been tapped and tested, and had supplied a strange but excellent vintage, that the rain broke forth out of the dark clouds and the storm sang through the twigs of the trees and over the crested waters of the lake.

Several bottles were soon filled from the great cask, and a supply provided that would last for many days. Drinking and jesting, and safely housed from the fury of the weather, they sat together in the glow of the fireside. Then the old fisherman spoke, and all of a sudden in a very serious way:

'Ah! thou mighty God, how we enjoy here Thy goodly gift, and yet he to whom it lately belonged must have left his life for pledge down there in the river.'

'Oh, never mind about him!' said Undine, and with a smile she lifted her glass to the knight. But Huldbrand continued:

'By the honour of a gentleman, good father, could I by so doing find and save him, I would grudge no wandering through the dark out there, and no danger. But I can tell you this, that if ever I come again to the haunts of men I will seek out that fellow or his heirs, and I will pay for this wine twice and three times its value.'

That pleased the old man; he nodded approval at the knight, and now, with an easy mind and a clear conscience, he emptied his glass. But Undine said to Huldbrand:

'You may do what you please with your compensa-

tion and your gold. But it was a stupid idea to run out and search. I should cry my eyes out if you got lost, and you must confess that it would be nicer to stay with me and drink good wine.'

'Why, yes, of course!' Huldbrand answered, smiling.

'Well, then, how silly it was of you to talk like that. Everybody is bound to take care of himself; and what do other people matter?'

The housewife turned from her with a sigh, shaking her head; the fisherman forgot how fond he was of the pretty maiden, and reproved her.

'One would think heathens and Turks had brought you up,' he concluded by saying. 'God pardon you and me for it, you naughty child.'

'Yes, that is all very well, but that is my opinion,' continued Undine, 'whoever may have brought me up, and all your words don't alter the case.'

'Be silent!' said the fisherman sternly, and she, who in spite of all her pertness was obviously frightened, clung trembling to Huldbrand, and asked in quite a whisper:

'Are you angry too, my beautiful friend?'

The knight pressed her soft hand and stroked her hair. He found nothing to say, for annoyance at the harshness of the old man towards Undine sealed his lips, and so the two couples sat there, angry with each other, in an embarrassed silence.

CHAPTER VI

A WEDDING

A FAINT knocking at the door sounded through this silence, and alarmed every one who was sitting in the

cottage. It sometimes happens that a very trifling occurrence, which is quite unexpected, produces an extraordinary agitation of mind. But in this case it must be recollected that the notorious forest lay close to them, and that their point of land was unapproachable for human visitors. They looked anxiously at one another; the tapping was repeated, accompanied by a deep sigh; the knight reached for his sword. But the old man said quietly, 'If it is what I fear, no weapons will help us.'

Meanwhile, Undine approached the door, and said in a cross and saucy voice, 'If you are up to any mischief, you Earth-Spirits, Kühleborn shall teach you better manners.'

The alarm of the others was increased by these amazing words; they gazed in wonder at the girl, and Huldbrand was on the point of addressing a question to her, when somebody outside said: 'I am no earth-spirit, but a spirit that still is housed in an earthly body. If you are willing to help me, and if you fear God, you people inside the cottage, then let me in!'

But, while these words were being spoken, Undine had opened the door, and with a lamp had thrown light out into the stormy night. They saw out there an aged priest, who shrank back at the unexpected sight of such a lovely maiden. He was convinced that so splendid a vision at the door of so lowly a cottage must be a trick played upon him by the invisible world, so he began to pray: 'All good spirits, praise the Lord God!'

'I am not a ghost,' said Undine, smiling. 'Do I look so ugly? At all events, you can see for yourself that pious words do not frighten me. I know about God, and how to praise Him. Every one after his kind,

and to that end hath He created us. Step in, reverend father: you will find good folk here.'

The clergyman entered, bowing after some hesitation, and he looked both kind and venerable. But water was dripping from every fold of his dark robes, from his long white beard, and from the white locks of his hair. The fisherman and the knight led him into an inner room and gave him other clothes, while they handed out the garments of the priest to the women to be dried. The old gentleman thanked them very graciously and pleasantly, but could not be persuaded to try on the splendid mantle which the knight urged upon him. Instead of that he chose an old grey overcoat of the fisherman's. When they came back again into the sitting-room the housewife handed the priest at once her great arm-chair, and would not be pacified until he had seated himself in it, 'for,' said she, 'you are old and weary, and a man of God as well.'

Undine pushed under the stranger's feet the little stool on which she was used to sit by Huldbrand's side, and in many ways she waited upon the good old man with graceful and civil offices. Huldbrand teased her about it in a whisper, but she answered him quite gravely:

'He serves Him who has made us all. It is not a thing to be joking about.'

The knight and the fisherman then pressed food and wine upon the priest, and he, when he had eaten and drunk, began to tell them how that yesterday he had started from his cloister on the opposite shore of the great lake to travel to the bishop's see, in order that he might tell the bishop what misery the late floods had caused to the cloister and its manorial villages. But after going far out of his way, on account

of these same floods, he had been obliged that evening, as night was coming on, to persuade two stout boatmen to ferry him over an arm of the lake which had broken its bounds.

'But scarcely,' he continued, 'had our little bark touched the waves, than a frightful storm burst upon us, raging over our very heads. It seemed as though the waters had only been waiting for us in order to begin the most giddy whirling dance around us. The oars were soon torn out of the hands of my guides, and floated shattered on the waves farther and farther in front of us. We ourselves flew helpless hither and thither, and were driven by the frantic forces of nature towards this distant shore of yours, which we perceived with difficulty through the fog and foam. Meanwhile the skiff whirled onwards more wildly and more swiftly. I know not whether it perished, or whether I plunged out of it in the dark anguish of approaching hideous death, but at any rate I was borne on until a wave lifted me up under the trees of your island.'

'You may well say island!' exclaimed the fisherman. 'A little while ago it was a point of land. But now, since the forest torrent and the lake have been so frenzied, we no longer know ourselves.'

'I happened to notice,' said the priest, 'while I crept in the darkness along the water, meeting nothing but wild noises in my ears, that at length a beaten path seemed to disappear into the hubbub. Then I caught the light of your cottage, and felt my way here, whither I cannot enough thank my heavenly Father for having, after saving me from the waters, brought me, into the midst of such pious folk as you are; and that so much the more as I cannot be sure whether in

this life I shall ever see again any other human beings than you four.'

'What do you mean?' asked the fisherman.

'Do you then know how long this riot of the elements will last?' replied the clergyman. 'And I am stricken in years. It may well be that the stream of my existence may gradually sink under the earth, ere the rage of yonder torrent be appeased. And, moreover, it were not impossible that the foaming water might so swell on between you and the forest, as that you might be so far divided from the rest of the world, that your frail fishing-boat might no more be able to cross the lake, and that in their distraction the inhabitants of firm land might altogether forget you.'

At this the old housewife crossed herself and said, 'May God forbid!' But the fisherman looked at her smiling, and replied:

'Why, there would be nothing new in that, especially for you, dear wife. For years past, have you gone any farther than to the confines of the forest? And who have you seen, except Undine and me? It is only very lately that the knight and the priest have joined us. They will stay with us, if we are turned into an island and forgotten, and you at least will be all the better off for that.'

'I don't know,' said the old woman: 'it would be a terrible thing to realize that one was cut off from all other people for ever, even though one does never know them or see them.'

'But then you'll stay with us, you'll stay with us,' whispered Undine in a very soft voice, half singing, and clinging still closer to Huldbrand's side.

But he was drowned in his own strange fancies. The world beyond the forest torrent seemed, since

the priest's last words, to have been receding farther and farther from him; but the blossoming island, on which he was living, grew greener, and smiled on him with redoubled sweetness. His bride bloomed like the loveliest rose on this little atom of the earth's surface, and indeed on the whole earth itself, and here was the priest they needed. But the fair maiden caught an indignant glance of the housewife's, scandalized that Undine should press so closely to her lover in the very presence of the holy man: it seemed as though a stream of scolding words must follow. Then the knight could restrain himself no longer, but, turning to the priest, he said:

'You see before you here a bridegroom and a bride, reverend sir, and, if this girl and these good old fisherfolk have no objection, you shall unite us this very evening.'

The two old people were greatly startled. They had now and again thought of such a possibility, but even to one another they had never expressed their thought in words, and now, when the knight spoke out in this plain way, there seemed something novel and monstrous in the idea. Undine suddenly became quite grave, and looked down meditatively in front of her, while the priest inquired more exactly what the circumstances were, and assured himself of the old folks' consent. After a great deal of discussion, everything was satisfactorily cleared up. The housewife went to arrange the bridal chamber for the young people, and to look for two consecrated candles which had been a long while in her possession. The knight meanwhile drew in his golden chain, and was about to twist off two of its rings, that he might exchange them with the bride. But she, when she saw what he

was doing, seemed to swim up out of the depths of her thought, and said:

'Not so! My parents did not send me out into the world quite a beggar. Indeed, they must have known that sooner or later such an evening as this would come to me.'

So saying, she sped out of the door, and came back in a moment with two valuable rings, one of which she presented to her bridegroom, while she kept the other herself. The old fisherman gazed at her in amazement, and so still more did the housewife, who at this instant returned, for they knew that the child had never shown them these jewels.

'My parents,' replied Undine, 'had these little things sewn into the beautiful dress that I was wearing when I came to you. But they forbade me ever to speak of them to any one until my wedding-night. So I quietly took them out of doors and hid them until to-day.'

The priest interrupted any further flow of questioning and surprise by lighting the consecrated candles, putting them on the table, and bidding the betrothed couple to stand before him. Then he wedded them, with brief and solemn words, the old folks blessed the young ones, while the bride leaned against the knight trembling slightly and in deep thought. Then the priest all at once said: 'What odd people you are! Why did you tell me you were the only human beings here on the island? And yet all the time I was conducting the ceremony I saw opposite me a fine, tall man in a white mantle looking in at the window. He must be in front of the door at this moment, and perhaps he wants something in the house.'

'God forbid,' said the old wife, starting, while the

fisherman shook his head without a word, and Huldbrand leaped to the window. He could not help thinking he saw a streak of whiteness, which immediately and totally disappeared into the night. He persuaded the priest that he must have made a complete mistake, and they all sat down happily around the hearth.

CHAPTER VII

WHAT ELSE HAPPENED ON THE WEDDING NIGHT

All through the marriage service Undine had behaved with the greatest propriety, but as soon as it was over all the odd pranks that were in her rose to the surface with more audacity and impudence than ever. She teased her bridegroom and her foster-parents and even the priest, to whom she had just been so very respectful, with every kind of childish whimsy, and when the housewife was beginning to have something to say in the matter, the knight instantly silenced her by speaking in a very significant way of Undine as his wife. But, as a matter of fact, the knight himself was by no means overpleased with Undine's childish extravagance; yet no signs and no whisperings and no words of blame had any effect upon her. Whenever the bride observed that her lover was displeased—and now and then she did observe it—she became quieter at once, sat down beside him, whispered something in his ears with a smile, and smoothed the gathering wrinkles out of his brow. But the moment after she would begin again with some mad prank or other, and all would be worse than ever. At length the priest said very gravely but very kindly:

'My sweet young friend, one cannot look at you without being diverted, but do remember so to tune the music of your soul that it shall ever chime in harmony with that of your wedded husband.'

'Soul!' said Undine, and laughed. 'That sounds very pretty, and may be a very wise and proper rule for most people. But if one has not got such a thing as a soul, what is to be done then, I should like to know? And that is the case with me.'

The priest, greatly wounded, kept silence in a holy anger, and turned his eyes sorrowfully away from the girl. But she went up to him caressingly, and said:

'No, listen to me first, before you look so cross, for it grieves me that you should look like that, and you ought not to grieve any creature who has done nothing to harm you. Only be patient with me, and I will tell you exactly what I mean.'

They could see that she was preparing to tell them something very explicitly, when suddenly she stopped as though some inward horror had seized her, and broke into a copious flood of bitter tears. They could not tell what to make of her, and each in his different way gazed at her with solicitude. Then, at last, drying her tears and looking earnestly at the priest, she said:

'To have a soul must be a delightful thing, but a most fearful thing too. Would it not be better—tell me, sir, in God's name—would it not be better to have nothing to do with it?'

She was silent once more, as though her tears were pent up, while she awaited an answer. All the persons in the cottage had now risen from their seats, and recoiled from her with horror. But she seemed to have eyes for the priest only, while an expression of the

most vivid curiosity was painted on her features—an expression which struck the others with positive alarm.

'Heavy must be the burden of a soul,' she continued, while no one replied to her, 'heavy indeed. The very idea of its approach overshadows me with sorrow and anguish. And ah! a little while ago I was so happy, so light-hearted!'

And she broke into a fresh paroxysm of weeping, and hid her face in her dress. Then, with a solemn countenance, the priest turned to her, and conjured her to throw off all disguise in case any wicked thing was in her. But she sank at his knee, repeating all the pious words he said, and praising and thanking God that she was at peace with all the world. Then finally the priest said to the knight: 'Sir Bridegroom, I leave you alone with her to whom I have wedded you. So far as I can divine, there is nothing that is evil about her, although much that is strange. I commend her to your care and fealty and love.'

So saying, he went out, and the fisherman followed him, making the sign of the cross.

Undine had sunk to her knees; she uncovered her face, and she said, glancing shyly at Huldbrand:

'Ah! you do not wish to have me any longer, and yet, poor wretched child that I am, I have done no harm.'

She looked at him with an air so utterly pathetic and touching that her bridegroom forgot all his terror and suspicion, and hastening to her he clasped her in his arms. Then through her tears she smiled; it was as when the sunrise lights up the little rills.

'You cannot leave me,' she whispered familiarly and confidently, stroking the knight's cheeks with her

soft hand. He resolutely put awayf rom him the fearful thoughts which still lurked in the recesses of his mind—thoughts which would fain persuade him that it was an elf or even a wicked illusion from the world of spirits that he had married. But, strive as he would, he could not prevent one question from crossing his lips:

'Darling Undine, do tell me one thing—what was it you said about earth-spirits when the priest knocked at the door, and about Kühleborn?'

'Fairy tales! children's fairy tales!' said Undine, laughing, restored all at once to her accustomed gaiety. 'I began by frightening you, and you ended by frightening me. That is the end of the song, and of our wedding-night!'

'Ah! no, that is not the end,' said the enamoured knight. He blew out the candles, and, with a thousand kisses, led his lovely bride, by the light of the moon now shining brightly through the casement, into their bridal chamber.

CHAPTER VIII

THE DAY AFTER THE WEDDING

The young couple were awakened by the clear light of morning. Undine shrank bashfully underneath the coverlid, while Huldbrand lay quietly staring before him. Whenever he had fallen asleep during the night he had been disturbed by strange and horrible dreams of phantoms, who endeavoured with horrid grins to disguise themselves as fair women, or else of fair women whose faces suddenly became the masks of dragons. And when he awakened in the grip of these

hideous visions, the pale, cold light of the moon would be streaming through the window. He would glance in terror at Undine, on whose bosom he had fallen asleep, and who now lay by him in unruffled beauty and sweetness. Then he would press a fugitive kiss on the rosy lips, and would fall asleep again, only to be aroused by fresh horrors. But now that, completely awakened, he went over all this experience in his mind, every doubt was removed that in his error he had entertained regarding his lovely lady. He very frankly prayed her to forgive him the wrong he had done her, but she merely held out her beautiful hand to him, gave a very deep sigh, and was silent. But an inexpressibly tender look in her eyes, such as he had never seen there before, left him in no doubt that the heart of Undine was wholly without guile towards him.

He cheerfully arose, and went forth to their housemates in the common room. The three were seated, with anxious looks, round the hearth, not one of them having been brave enough to say his or her thought aloud. It looked as though the priest were inwardly engaged in prayer that all evil might be averted. But when they saw the young bridegroom enter with such a happy mien, the look of care was smoothed out of all their faces; and the old fisherman actually began to rally the knight in such a seemly, honest fashion that even the old housewife smiled a pleasant smile. And now Undine herself was ready at last, and stood in the doorway. Everybody wished to greet her, and everybody could but notice how strange a look the young wife bore, and yet how familiar. The priest was the first to welcome her with paternal love beaming in his eyes, and as he lifted his hand in benediction the

lovely woman sank to her knees trembling before him. She very humbly begged his pardon for all the foolish things that she must have said the day before, and entreated him in tones of deep feeling that he would pray for the health of her soul. Then she rose, kissed her foster-parents, and said, thanking them for all their goodness:

'Oh, now I feel in my heart of hearts how much, how inexpressibly much, you have done for me, you dear, dear people!'

They could scarcely disentangle themselves from her embraces, but no sooner did she perceive that the housewife was thinking about the breakfast than she stationed herself at the hearth, cooked and arranged and managed everything, so that only the most trifling labours were left for the old mother to attend to.

She was like that all through the day—quiet, kind, and attentive, a little housemother, and at the same time a little tenderly bashful and maidenly being. The three, who had known her for so long a time, expected every moment to see a transformation back into her capricious mood. But they looked for it in vain. Undine remained as gentle as an angel, and as placid. The priest could not turn away his eyes from her, and over and over again said to the bridegroom: 'Sir, through my unworthy means, the grace of Heaven wedded you yesterday to a treasure! Preserve it as you should, and it will tend to your welfare through time and through eternity.'

When evening came, Undine hung with a tender meekness on the knight's arm, and gently drew him to the door, where the setting sun was lighting up the moist grass, and gleaming round the tall slender stems

of the trees. In the eyes of the young wife there swam, as it were, a dew of melancholy and of love, a tender sorrowful secret seemed hanging on her lips, a secret that was translated only in sighs that were scarcely audible. Silently she led her lover farther away; when he spoke, she replied only with looks which might be not wholly pertinent to his questions, but in which there lay a whole heaven of love and shy devotion. So they reached the bank of the swollen forest torrent, and, to the astonishment of the knight, they found that its waters had so far retired and had become so quiet that no trace was left of their former rage and volume.

'By to-morrow,' said the lovely wife with a tear in her voice,—'by to-morrow it will have quite subsided, and then no one can prevent you from riding off, whither you will.'

'Not without you, little Undine,' answered the knight as he laughed: 'even if I wanted to escape you, Church and State, Priest and Emperor, would combine to bring you back your fugitive.'

'It all depends on you, it all depends on you,' whispered the girl, half weeping, half smiling. 'But I think you will want to keep me, for I am so very fond of you. Now, take me over to the little island, that lies in front of us. It shall be decided there. I could very easily slip through the wavelets by myself, but it is so delightful to rest in your arms, and, if you cast me off, at all events I shall have been resting sweetly there for the last time.'

Huldbrand, strangely agitated and alarmed, knew not what to reply. He took her in his arms, and carried her over, now for the first time realizing, as he did so, that this was the very island whence on that first night he had borne her back to the old fisherman.

He laid her down, a lovely burden, on the soft grass, and would have seated himself caressingly beside her; but she said, 'No! over there, opposite me! I wish to read your eyes before your lips can speak. Listen attentively to what I am going to tell you.' And then she began.

'You must know, my sweet darling, that in the elements there exist beings whose outer semblance is almost the same as your own. They but seldom allow you to gaze upon them. In the flames glitter and sparkle the marvellous salamanders; deep within the earth the lean, spiteful gnomes have their dwelling; through the woodlands flit the wood-folk, whose home is in the air; and in the lakes and streams and rivulets there moves the endless race of spirits of the water. In ringing vaults of crystal, through which heaven looks down with sun and stars, these have their abode; lofty trees of coral, loaded with blue and ruddy fruitage, flourish in those gardens, where the inhabitants walk on pure sea-sand, or over fair and variegated shells. All that the ancient world could boast of beauty, all that our world of to-day is not worthy to enjoy, that the streams concealed with their secret veils of silver, and below them sparkle now those noble memorials, bedewed by those loving waters which allure them out of their exquisite moss-blooms and tufted reeds. But there they dwell, and are gentle and mild to look upon, most of them fairer far than humankind. Many a fisherman has rejoiced to surprise a delicate water-girl, rising from the floods and singing. Of her beauty he has told his fellows, and men have come to name such strange maidens Undines. You, my dearest, are at this moment gazing upon just such an Undine.'

The knight endeavoured to persuade himself that his lovely wife was simply indulging in one of her pranks of mystification, and was entertaining herself by teasing him with a motley screed of legends. But, however hard he tried to think it, he could not persuade himself for a moment that it was so; a wild shudder passed through him; unable to pronounce a word, he stared with unaverted eye at the pretty narrator. But she mournfully shook her head, sighed out of a full heart, and continued as follows:

'We should be far better off than you other human beings—for human beings we consider ourselves, having the semblance and the body of humanity—but for one great disadvantage. We and those who resemble us in the other elements, we vanish and are gone, breath and body, so that no trace of us remains behind, and when you others on some future day shall wake to a purer life, we shall be what sand and smoke and wind and waves are made of. For no souls have we: it is the element that moves us, often, so long as we live, obeys us, when we die, turns us to dust; and we rejoice, without a peevish sigh, as do nightingales and little golden fishes and the other pretty children of nature. Yet all creatures desire to rise to higher things. So my father, who is a mighty prince of waters in the Mediterranean Sea, desired that his daughter should in measure possess a soul, and in consequence should share many of the sufferings of those in whom souls are born. But one of us can only win a soul by the most intimate union in love with one of your race. Now I do possess a soul; to you I owe this soul, O inexpressibly beloved one, and I will be grateful to you for it if you will not that my whole life through should be made wretched. For what would become

of me, if you were to avoid and repulse me? But I could not deceive even to retain you. And if you are going to repulse me, do it now, and pass back alone to yonder shore. I will plunge into this cascade, which is my father's brother, and leads a strange hermit's life here in the woodland, far from all old comrades. But strong is he, and more worth than many mighty rivers, and more precious, and as it was he who brought me here to the fisherman, me a gay and laughing child, he will lead me back again to my parents—I, with my soul, a loving, suffering woman.'

She would have said more, but Huldbrand cast his arms about her full of the tenderest agitation and love, and bore her back again to shore. Then, with tears and kisses, he swore that he would never leave his darling wife, and held himself a happier man than that Grecian statuary Pygmalion, whose fair marble was brought to life for him by the grace of Lady Venus. In sweet contentment Undine hung upon his arm as they wandered back to the cottage, and now she realized from the depths of her heart how little need she had to regret having deserted the crystal mansions of her wondrous father.

CHAPTER IX

HOW THE KNIGHT TOOK HIS YOUNG WIFE WITH HIM

When Huldbrand next morning awoke from slumber, he missed his lovely companion at his side, and he began directly to give way again to those ominous forebodings which told him that his marriage and the

exquisite Undine were nothing more than a fugitive illusion and imposture. But with that she entered at the door, kissed him, sat down on the bedside, and said:

'I went out rather early to see whether Uncle would keep his word. He has already drawn all the waters back into his peaceful channel, and now is flowing through the woodland like the sober hermit that he used to be. His comrades in the water and in the air have all gone to rest; everything is peaceful around us, and you can journey homewards dry-foot as soon as you will.'

It seemed to Huldbrand as though he must be dreaming with his eyes wide open, so little sense could he find in this strange relation of his wife. But he did not allow her to perceive this, and the illimitable sweetness of the dear woman soon set every secret presentiment to rest. As he was standing a little while afterwards with her at the door, and was gazing over the verdant point of land with its bright boundaries of water, he felt so happy in this cradle of his love that he said:

'Why must we start to-day? In the world outside we shall find no days more delicious than those we have lived through in this our secret hiding-place. Let us at least see the sun go down from here two or three times more.'

'As my lord would have it!' replied Undine in a graceful humility. 'The only thing is that the old folks could in no circumstances have parted from me without pain, and that if we give them time to observe in me the workings of a real soul, and the springs of genuine love and honour, their poor eyes will certainly go blind with the multitude of their tears. At present they suppose my quietness and docility to be of no

more significance than is the restfulness of the lake when the air is tranquil, and my affection no deeper than that of a sapling or a floweret. Do not make me choose the very moment when a heart agitated with love has newly been bestowed upon me, to take it from them for ever; and yet how could I hide from them the new conditions, should we continue to stay here together?'

Huldbrand agreed that she was right. He went to the old man, and made arrangements for the journey, proposing to start immediately. The priest offered himself as a companion to the young couple; the knight and he soon mounted the young wife on horseback, and rapidly set forth with her across the dried-up bed of the woodland torrent into the forest. Undine wept silently but bitterly; the old folk lamented her aloud. It seemed as though they already had a foreboding of what they were losing in their sweet foster-daughter.

The three travellers had entered in silence the deepest shadows of the woodland. It was a pretty sight in that green hall of leafage to see the lovely woman seated on her noble, richly-caparisoned steed, and on one side of her the venerable priest in the white robe of his office, on the other the blooming youthful knight in his bright many-coloured raiment, girt with his splendid sword, each stepping carefully beside her. Huldbrand had no eyes save for his fair bride. Undine, who had dried her gentle tears, had only eyes for him, and their looks conversed in a quiet speech without words, which was first interrupted by a slight interchange of greeting between the priest and a fourth fellow-traveller whom they now observed for the first time.

He wore a white garment, exactly like the priest's

robe of office, except that the hood was pulled far down over his eyes, and that the whole dress flowed round him in folds so wide that every moment he was obliged to sweep it up and throw it over his arm, or by some other such contrivance prevent it from hindering his movements. When the young couple had perceived him, he said:

'And so I have been living many years here in the woodland, venerable sir, without ever imagining that any one would call me a hermit. For, as I said, of penance know I nothing, and have no idea that I require it. The fact merely is that I am fond of the woodland, because it looks so curiously pretty, and amuses me so much, when in my fluttering white garments I wander through the shadowy places and the foliage, until by chance a fair beam of the sun shall pierce through and flash upon me.'

'You are a very strange individual,' replied the priest, 'and I should like to know more about you.'

'And who then are you, to change the subject?' asked the stranger.

'They call me Father Heilmann,' said the holy man, 'and I come from Mariagruss Cloister, on the other side of the lake.'

'Ah! indeed,' replied the stranger. 'My own name is Kühleborn, and as a mere matter of courtesy I might add Herr von Kühleborn, or Baron von Kühleborn; for I am as free as the birds in the woodland, and a little freer. By the way, I have something to tell that young woman over there.'

And before any one knew what he was doing he was on the other side of the priest, close beside Undine, and was stretching up to whisper something in her ear. But she withdrew in alarm, saying:

'I have nothing more to do with you.'

'Ho! ho!' laughed the stranger, 'what a monstrous grand marriage you must have made, to have nothing more to do with your own relations! What, not a word for Uncle Kühleborn, who carried you to this spot on his back?'

'I must ask you,' replied Undine, 'to let me see no more of you. I am afraid of you now, and if my husband sees me in such strange company, and with such odd relations, will he not be startled?'

'Nonsense!' said Kühleborn. 'You must not forget that I am your guardian here. If it were not for me the riotous earth-spirits might play stupid practical jokes with you. So let me accompany you in this quiet way; the old priest there seems to recollect me much better than you do, for he just now assured me that my face seemed very familiar to him, and that I really must have been near him when he fell into the water. It is true, I was, for I was the identical sheet of water which shipped him out, and on which in process of time he swam safe to shore.'

Undine and the knight looked at Father Heilmann, but he seemed to be walking in a dream, and no longer to understand what was said to him. Then Undine said to Kühleborn:

'I see already before us the end of the woodland. We need your help no more, and nothing can frighten us so much as you do. Therefore, in the name of mercy, be so good as to disappear, and let us go our way in peace.'

But Kühleborn seemed very unwilling to do this. He made an ugly face, and grinned at Undine, who screamed out loud and turned to her husband for help. Like a flash, the knight was on the other side of the

horse, and swinging his sharp blade against Kühleborn's head. But it struck a torrent, which came streaming down from a lofty rock, and suddenly poured over them in a splashing that sounded almost like laughter, and drenched them to the skin. The priest, as though suddenly awakened, said:

'I have long been expecting that, the brook ran so close beside us on the hillside. At first it almost seemed to me as though it were a human being and could speak.'

In Huldbrand's ear the waterfall distinctly sounded these words:

'Brisk knight, stout knight, I rage not, I wrangle not. Guard always just so well your lovely bride, knight so stout, brisk young blood!'

A few steps more, and they were in the open. The imperial city lay sparkling before them, and the evening sun, which gilded its roofs, dried the soaked raiment of the wanderers.

CHAPTER X

HOW THEY LIVED IN THE CITY

The sudden disappearance of the young knight Huldbrand von Ringstetten had created a great sensation in the imperial city, and all those to whom his gallant bearing in tournament and dance had endeared him, and all who recalled his gentle, pleasant manners, were sorely grieved. His servants would not quit the place without their master, although not one of them had the courage to ride after him in the shadow of the dreadful forest. So they remained in their lodging, vainly hoping, as men are used to do, and

keeping the memory of the departed one alive with their lamentations. As there soon followed the heavy storms and floods, nobody doubted any longer that the handsome stranger was lost, and Bertalda too bewailed her fate quite openly, cursing herself for having tempted him to take that monstrous ride into the woodland. Her ducal foster-parents were come to take her away, but Bertalda persuaded them to stay with her, until some certain knowledge could be arrived at as to Huldbrand's life or death. She tried to persuade several young knights, who were paying assiduous court to her, to follow the noble adventurer into the forest. But she could not encourage them to expect her hand as the reward of their devotion, since she had not given up all hope of yet bestowing it on the returning Huldbrand, while for the sake of a glove or of a ribbon, or even of a kiss, no one would stake his life, especially on the errand of searching for so dangerous a rival.

When, therefore, Huldbrand thus unexpectedly and suddenly returned, the servants and the inhabitants of the city, and almost all other persons, with the exception of Bertalda, rejoiced; but while the rest were quite pleased to see that he brought back with him an exquisite bride, and Father Heilmann as a witness to the wedding, it was impossible that Bertalda should do otherwise than be distressed. In the first place she had really learned to love the young knight with all her heart, and then, through her sorrow at his disappearance, all eyes had been instructed to notice a great deal more than she now wished them to see. She behaved, however, like a clever woman—adapted herself to her circumstances, and was as kind as possible to Undine, whom everybody in the city

supposed to be a princess that Huldbrand had released from some wicked magician in the woodland. If any one asked herself or her husband for further particulars, they knew how to keep silence or else turn the conversation; Father Heilmann's lips were sealed for all idle gossip, and moreover Huldbrand took care that he was soon conducted back to his cloister, so that folks had to be satisfied with wild conjecture, and even Bertalda herself knew no more of the truth than other people.

Undine moreover endeared herself to this charming maiden more and more every day. 'We must have been acquainted before,' she used often to say to her, 'or else there must be a strange bond of sympathy between us, because without a reason—understand me, without some deep secret reason—no one becomes so fond of another person as I became of you the very moment I first saw you.' And Bertalda too could not deny that she was unable to help feeling the greatest confidence in and affection for Undine, although she had every species of reason to bitterly dislike this her so fortunate rival. Actuated by this sense of mutual attachment, the one with her foster-parents, the other with her husband, did everything in her power to put off further and further the date of their departure. To so great a length did it go that it was positively proposed that Bertalda should for a time accompany Undine to Ringstetten Castle, at the sources of the Danube.

They were discussing this, one beautiful evening, while they wandered to and fro by starlight in the market-place of the imperial city, which was surrounded by lofty trees. The young couple had persuaded Bertalda, when it was already rather late, to

join them in a stroll, and all three were walking securely up and down under the dark-blue sky, often interrupting their conversation to pay a tribute of admiration to the sumptuous fountain in the midst of the square, and to its wonderful murmuring and babbling. All seemed to them delicate and pleasant; between the shadows of the trees there stole the glimmering lights of the houses near by, a quiet noise of children at play and of other happy human beings reached them there; they seemed so isolated and yet so much at home in the very heart of the bright and living world; what might appear difficult by daylight now seemed to solve itself, and the three friends could no longer understand how any objection could have been raised to the plan that Bertalda should travel with them. But just as they were positively fixing the day of their common departure a tall man approached them from the centre of the market-place, bowed respectfully to them all, and whispered something in the young wife's ear. Displeased both with the interruption and with the intruder, she yet went a few steps aside with the stranger, and the two began to whisper to one another in what seemed a foreign tongue. Huldbrand fancied that he recognized the strange man, and stared so hard at him that he neither heard nor answered Bertalda's astonished questions. Presently Undine joyfully clapped her hands and left the stranger standing there. With many nods of the head and hasty, uncertain steps the latter withdrew, and walked into the fountain. Now Huldbrand thought that he was quite certain of his facts, but Bertalda asked:

'What did the fountain-man want with you, dear Undine?'

The young wife laughed mysteriously, and replied:

'The day after to-morrow, on your birthday, you shall know, you darling child!'

And not a word more could be extracted from her. She invited Bertalda and her foster-parents to dine with her that day, and soon after this they parted.

'Kühleborn?' said Huldbrand to his lovely bride, with a secret shudder, as soon as Bertalda had left them, and they were picking their way home alone through the darkening street.

'Yes, it was he,' answered Undine, 'and he wanted to waste my time with all sorts of stupid stuff. But in the middle of it all, quite against his wish, he delighted me with a most welcome message. If you want to know what that was, my dear lord and master, all you have to do is to command, and I will tell you every word of it. But if you would like to give your Undine a very, very great pleasure, you will wait until the day after to-morrow, and take your share of the surprise.'

The knight gladly vouchsafed to his wife the favour that she asked, and even in her sleep she murmured, smiling, 'How delighted and how surprised that dear, dear Bertalda will be when she learns what the message of the fountain-man was!'

CHAPTER XI

BERTALDA'S BIRTHDAY

THE company were seated at table; Bertalda, adorned with jewels and flowers, the various gifts of her foster-parents and her friends, was at the top of the table looking like a goddess of spring; at her side were

Undine and Huldbrand. When the rich banquet was over, and the dessert was set on, the doors were thrown open after the good old German custom, so that people outside could see and share in the pleasures of the quality. Servants distributed wine and cakes among the spectators. With concealed impatience, Huldbrand and Bertalda awaited the promised announcement, and could not refrain from constantly glancing at Undine. But that lovely lady remained perfectly quiet, and, merely smiling to herself, looked straight in front of her. Any one who was acquainted with her intention could see that every moment she was at the point of betraying her delightful secret, and yet always renounced the indulgence of doing so, just as children sometimes treat their most delicious morsels. Bertalda and Huldbrand shared this ecstatic feeling, awaiting in hope and anxiety the new happiness which should presently descend upon them from the lips of their friend. Then some of those who were present prayed Undine for a song. She seemed pleased at the proposal, bade one fetch her lute, and sang the following words:

Morning so bright,
Blossoms so gay,
Grasses so fragrant and tall
On the shore of the billowy lake!
Among the grasses
What shimmers so white?
Is it a great white bloom
Fallen from heaven into the lap of the meadow?
Ah! it is a tender child!
Unwitting, with the flowers it sporteth,
Even as they were the golden lights of morning.
Oh, whence? sweet vision, whence?
Afar, from an unknown shore,
The lake hath borne thee here.

Nay, thou tender creature, grasp not
With thy little hand these grasses.
They can give thee back no greeting,
Strange and mute their flowers to thee,
They can but adorn themselves,
Pour their own rich hearts in perfume.
None can fold thee to a bosom,
None supply a mother's breast.
Early at the gates of being,
Heaven still smiling from thy features,
Art thou of the best bereavèd,
Child of grief, and know'st it not.
See! a noble duke comes riding,
Checks his steed's proud step before thee,
Bears thee off to share his castle,
Where the arts and graces flourish.
Thou hast gained an endless guerdon,
Blooming, loveliest in the land!
Ah! but with life's rarest treasure
Left upon an unknown strand.

She lowered her lute with a melancholy smile; the eyes of Bertalda's ducal foster-parents stood full of tears. 'So was it that morning when I found you, you poor sweet orphan!' said the Duke, deeply moved. 'The fair songstress was right: we have never been able to give the best things to you.'

'But you must hear what happened to the poor parents,' said Undine, she struck the chords, and sang:

Mother searches all the chambers,
    Cracks that scarce would hide a mouse—
Finds for all her lamentations
    Nothing but an empty house.

Empty house! oh, words of sorrow,
    For a mother's heart distrest,
Where by day her child went roaming,
    And by night was rocked to rest.

Green once more the beech-trees burgeon,
High in heaven rides back the sun,
But, thou mother, vainly seeking,
Shalt not greet thy little one.

And, when airs of eve are breathing,
Father comes as sunset dies.
Though he veil his grief in smiling,
Tears shall brim into his eyes.

Father knows the silent chamber
Hides a phantom, chill and black,
Only hears pale mother moaning,
And no child that greets him back.

'Oh, for God's sake, Undine, where are my parents?' said Bertalda, weeping. 'You surely know, you surely have discovered, wonderful woman that you are, or else you would not so have torn my heart. Are they, perhaps, here now? Can it be——'

Her eyes surveyed the splendid company, and rested on a lady of a royal house, who sat close to her foster-parents. Then Undine turned herself towards the door, while her eyes overflowed with exquisite emotion.

'Where, then, are those poor, patient parents?' she asked, and the aged fisherman and his wife stepped forward out of the throng of spectators. Their eyes, as if in inquiry, hung now on Undine, now on the lovely lady who must be their daughter. 'It is she,' stammered Undine in a rapture, and the two old folks hung, weeping aloud and praising God, on the neck of their long-lost daughter.

But in terror and anger Bertalda broke away from their embraces. It was too much for her proud spirit to be so recognized at the very moment when she had made up her mind that her former glory was but to

be enhanced, and that the regal canopy and crown hung just above her head. It flashed through her mind that her rival had arranged all this merely in order to humiliate her in the presence of Huldbrand and of all the world. She scowled at Undine; she scowled at the two old people. The ugly words 'Trickstress!' and 'Venal wretches!' were hissed from her lips. Then said the old fisherman's wife, as if speaking to herself, 'Ah! God, this is a wicked woman, and yet in my heart I feel that it was I who gave her birth.' The old fisherman kept his hands clasped, and quietly was praying that she might not prove to be their daughter. Pale as death Undine turned from the parents to Bertalda, from Bertalda to the parents, as if she had been suddenly flung out of the heaven of her dreams into an agony and a terror that she never before had realized even when dreaming.

'Have you a soul, then? Have you really a soul, Bertalda?' she exclaimed to her indignant friend, as if trying to recall herself to her senses out of some sudden aberration or terrifying illusion of the night. But as Bertalda became more and more violently exasperated, as the repulsed parents began to moan aloud, and the spectators divided themselves into two contending and eager parties, she desired in so dignified and serious a manner to be permitted to speak in her husband's room that in a moment all was silence around her. She then passed to the upper end of the table, where Bertalda had been sitting, humbled yet proud, and made, while all eyes were bent upon her, the following address:

'You, who gaze at her so unkindly and so vindictively, and have so grievously ruined my pleasant feast, oh! God, I had no conception that you could be

so foolish and so hard-hearted, and all my life long I shall never be able to comprehend it. That I have gone the wrong way to work in all this affair is no fault of mine; believe me, it is your fault, little as you may be inclined to suppose it. I have not much to say to you, but this one thing must be said—I have told no lie. I can and I will give you no proof beyond my bare assertion, but to that I will swear. I was told the fact by him who decoyed Bertalda away from her parents into the water, and afterwards placed her on the green meadow in the Duke's path.'

'She is a sorceress,' shrieked Bertalda, 'a witch, who deals with wicked spirits! She admits it herself!'

'That I do not,' said Undine, a whole heaven of innocence and confidence in her eyes. 'I am no witch. Only look at me, and see.'

'Then she lies and blusters,' Bertalda continued, 'and cannot prove that I am the child of these base folks. My ducal parents, I entreat you, lead me forth from this assembly, and from this city, where people do nothing but defame me.'

But the noble old duke remained standing where he was, and the duchess said: 'We must thoroughly understand the situation. God forbid that, till the truth is known, I put one foot out of this hall.'

Then the old fisher-wife approached her, bowed deeply to the duchess, and said:

'My heart lies open before you, O you noble and God-fearing lady. I must tell you that if this wicked maiden is my daughter, she bears a mark like a violet between her shoulders and another on the instep of her left foot. If she will but consent to leave the hall with me——'

'I will not undress myself before that peasant-

woman,' said Bertalda, proudly turning her back upon her.

'But before me you will,' said the duchess very gravely. 'You will follow me, madam, into yonder room, and the good old wife will come too.'

The three disappeared, and all the rest of the assembled people remained in silence, on the tip-toe of expectation. After a little space the women returned, Bertalda as pale as death, and the duchess said:

'Right must be right; and so I declare that our lady hostess has spoken nothing but the truth. Bertalda is the fisherman's daughter, and that is all that those here gathered need to know.'

The princely pair withdrew, in company with their foster-daughter. At a sign from the duke, the fisherman and his wife followed them. The other guests went away, silent or secretly murmuring, and Undine sank bitterly weeping into the arms of Huldbrand.

CHAPTER XII

HOW THEY JOURNEYED FROM THE IMPERIAL CITY

THE Lord of Ringstetten would have been well pleased if all the events of this day could have been prevented. But, as it turned out, he could not but be gratified to find his exquisite wife so pious, gracious, and dignified. 'If indeed I have given her a soul, it must be admitted that I have given her a better one than my own,' and so he began to console the weeping Undine, and to arrange to leave on the very next day a place which, after such an incident, could not but be distasteful to her. Yet it is certain that popular opinion about her had not altered. As something

extraordinary had always been anticipated, the strange discovery of Bertalda's parentage occasioned little surprise, and every one was set against that young lady by the unseemly violence of her behaviour. But of that the knight and his lady knew nothing; besides, the one would have been just as painful to Undine as the other, and so there was nothing better for them to do than to leave the walls of that ancient city behind them as soon as possible.

At daybreak a neat carriage was waiting for Undine in front of the door of their inn. The horses of Huldbrand and his squires were impatiently stamping the pavement. The knight was conducting his beautiful lady from the door, when a fisher-maiden stepped across her path.

'We do not need your wares,' said Huldbrand. 'We are on the point of departure.'

Then the fisher-maiden began to weep bitterly, and they perceived that it was Bertalda. They went back with her into the apartment, and learned from her that the duke and the duchess were so incensed at her rudeness and passion on the previous day that they had entirely withdrawn their protection from her, although not without presenting her with a generous dowry. At the same time the fisherman had been well rewarded, and had the same evening returned with his wife to their tongue of land.

'I wished to go with them,' she continued, 'but the old fisherman, who they say is my father——'

'They say truly, Bertalda,' Undine interrupted. 'The being whom you took to be the fountain-man positively assured me of it. He wanted to urge me not to take you with me to Ringstetten Castle, and so he divulged this secret.'

'Well, then,' said Bertalda, 'my father—since it must be so—my father said, "I will not take you with me till you are a changed girl. Come to us alone through the notorious woodland; that shall be the test of whether you are fond of us. But do not come as a lady; come as a fisher-lass." I want to do as he said, for all the world has forsaken me, and I will live and die as a poor fisher-maiden alone with these poor parents of mine. But, to tell the truth, the idea of the woodland frightens me. There are horrible phantoms living there, and I am so timid. But what can be done? I only came here now to beg the noble lady of Ringstetten to pardon me for acting so rudely yesterday. Oh, madam, I feel you meant it kindly, but you did not know how what you said would wound me, and many a mad, saucy word came streaming from my lips in my anguish and astonishment. Ah! forgive me! forgive me! I am so utterly miserable. Only think for yourself what I lately was; what I was no earlier than at the opening of your banquet yesterday; and what I am to-day.'

She sobbed out these words in a flood of tears, and next moment, in her bitter weeping, her arms were round Undine's neck. It was long before that lady, deeply moved, could contrive to utter a syllable, but at length she said:

'You shall go with us to Ringstetten; all shall be exactly as we arranged it should be; only call me again by my name, and no longer "madam" or "my lady". You see we were exchanged when we were infants; then our fates diverged; but henceforward we will be so close to one another that no human power shall be able to put us asunder. But the first thing is that you must go with us to Ringstetten. How, as

sisters, we will divide the good things of life, can be decided there.'

Bertalda glanced shyly at Huldbrand. He felt sorry for the handsome, afflicted maiden; he held out his hand to her, and told her caressingly to trust him and his wife.

'To your parents,' he said, 'we will send a message to explain why you have not come'; and he was going on to suggest many other plans regarding the good fisher-folk, but he saw how painfully Bertalda started at their mention, and so he amiably refrained from saying more. But he took her arm and handed her into the carriage, and Undine after her, and trotted gaily beside them, playing the guide so smartly that soon the imperial city and all its melancholy memories lay far behind them; and now the ladies breathed a fresher air, rolling along through the beautiful country which spread around them on each side.

After certain days' journey they came one beautiful evening to the castle of Ringstetten. The guards and retainers had much to recount to their young master, so that Undine stayed alone with Bertalda. They climbed on to the high wall of the stronghold, and enjoyed the exquisite view over Schwabia, which expanded on every side. Then a tall man stepped up to them who greeted them respectfully, and who almost reminded Bertalda of the fountain-man in the imperial city. The likeness grew still more undeniable when Undine glanced back at him with a displeased, almost threatening, aspect, and when with rapid steps and nodding head he retreated, as before, and disappeared in a neighbouring shrubbery. But Undine said:

'Don't be alarmed, dear little Bertalda: this time the ugly fountain-man shall do you no harm.'

And with that she told her the whole story from beginning to end, and who she herself was, and in what circumstances Bertalda had left the fisher-folk, and she, Undine, had come to them. At first the girl was startled at these revelations. She thought her friend must suddenly have gone out of her mind. But she became persuaded more and more that all was true in Undine's plausible narrative, which explained past events so satisfactorily, and what still more persuaded her was the inward sense which is so seldom deceived as to what is really the truth. It seemed strange to her to be thus living in the midst of one of those tales of wonder which she had so often heard recounted. She gazed at Undine with respect, but could no longer resist a shudder which seemed to pass between herself and her friend, and was still wondering, when they sat down to supper, how the knight could have so loved and attached himself to a being which, since these latest revelations, could not but appear to her more like a ghost than a woman.

CHAPTER XIII

HOW THEY LIVED AT RINGSTETTEN CASTLE

He who writes down this story, because it stirs his heart, and because he hopes that it may do the same to others, prays you, dear reader, for a favour. Forgive him, if now he is content briefly and in general terms to tell you what happened during a somewhat long period. He is well aware that it might cunningly be described how step by step the affections of Huldbrand began to be diverted from Undine to Bertalda, how Bertalda ever with more glowing passion came

forward to meet the young man, and how he and she seemed rather to dread the poor wife as if she were a stranger to their affections than to pity her, how Undine wept, and how her tears were like the gnawings of conscience in the heart of the knight, without ever reawakening the old love he bore her, so that, though sometimes he was kind to her, yet he would soon turn away from her with a cold shudder, and seek the human maiden, Bertalda; the writer knows that all these matters could, and perhaps should, be dwelt upon at length. But it would be far too painful to him to do so, for he has experienced such things in life, and is too full of their memory not to shrink from them. No doubt you have just the same feeling, dear reader, since such is the common fate of mortal man. Happy for you, if in this commerce you have gained more than you have inflicted, for here is it more blessed to receive than to give. For in such a case there only glides through your soul at these intimations a pleasurable pain, and perhaps a gentle tear slips down your cheek at the thought of that withered garden-plot which was once so deeply your delight. But enough of this; we will not pierce the heart with a thousand different pangs, but only briefly record that once it happened as I said above.

Poor Undine was very sad, and the other two were not genuinely happy; but Bertalda thought, in the slightest deviation from what she wished, to trace the jealous oppression of the offended lady of the house. Accordingly she had accustomed herself to a dictatorial manner, to which Undine gave way in melancholy resignation, and which was usually supported in the firmest manner by the infatuated Huldbrand. What still further disturbed social life in the castle

were all sorts of strange apparitions, which confronted Huldbrand and Bertalda in the vaulted passages of the fortress, and of which nothing had previously been heard within the memory of man. The tall white man, in whom, only too well, Huldbrand recognized Uncle Kühleborn, and Bertalda the ghostly fountain-man, often rose menacing before them both, but particularly in front of Bertalda, so that already once or twice she had been made quite ill with the terror of it, and often determined that she would quit the castle. But she stayed on, partly because she was so very fond of Huldbrand, and partly because, as they had never come to any definite understanding, she thought her innocence would protect her; partly, too, because she did not know whither to turn her steps. The old fisherman, on receiving the Lord of Ringstetten's message that Bertalda was staying with him, had replied in a scrawl which his age and little habit of writing made it very difficult to read. He said in it:

'I am now become a poor aged widower, for my dear, faithful wife has been taken from me by death. Yet lonely as I am, sitting here by myself in my cottage, I would rather have Bertalda's room than her company. Only see to it that she does my darling Undine no injury, or else my curse be upon her.' These last words Bertalda cast to the winds, but she was careful to remember what her father said about staying away, as we usually do in cases of this kind.

One day Huldbrand had just ridden off, when Undine, collecting the servants of the house, told them to bring a great slab of stone, and with it securely to close the splendid fountain which stood in the middle of the castle-court. The servants objected that in that case they would have to fetch up their water

from far down in the valley. Undine gave a melancholy smile.

'I am sorry to increase your work, dear children,' she said; 'I would gladly fetch up the pitchers of water myself, but this fountain must be closed. Take my word for it that there is nothing else to be done, and that by doing it we spare ourselves a far greater misfortune.'

All the servants rejoiced to find their gentle mistress so courteous; they asked no more questions, but seized the monstrous slab. It rose under their hands, and was ready to be poised over the fountain, when Bertalda came running up and called out to them to stop. Out of this well the water had to be fetched with which she refreshed herself by washing, and she would never consent to its being closed. But on this one occasion, though Undine was so accustomed to yield, she remained firm; she said that as housewife it was for her to decide how the arrangements of the household were most conveniently to be carried out, and that she would submit in these matters to the contradiction of none save her spouse and lord.

'But look, oh! look,' cried Bertalda, vexed and anxious—'look, the poor water is curling and winding about, because it is to be shut up from the clear light of the sun, and the pleasant sight of human faces, whose mirror it used to be.' As she said this, the water in the well positively began in the most extraordinary way to hiss and mount; it seemed as though something wanted to struggle forth, but Undine only with the more decision insisted that her orders should be carried out. The castle retainers were as glad to obey their gentle mistress as they were to vex Bertalda, and, however rudely the latter might storm and threaten,

in a very short time the slab lay fixed over the mouth of the fountain. Undine leaned pensively over it, and with her lovely finger she wrote upon its surface. But she must have concealed in her hand something very sharp and biting, for when she turned away, and the others approached, they found inscribed upon the stone all sorts of strange characters which none of them had ever seen before.

In the evening Bertalda received the knight, on his return home, with tears and complaints of Undine's conduct. He looked sternly at his wife, and she, poor lady, dropped her eyes with a melancholy air. Then she said, with great composure:

'My lord and husband dooms none of his vassals until he has given him a hearing. How much the less, then, his wedded wife.'

'Say, then, what drove you to this strange act?' said the knight, with a dark look on his face.

'I must be quite alone with you to tell you,' sighed Undine.

'You can tell me just as well in the presence of Bertalda,' he replied.

'Yes, if you order me to do so,' said Undine, 'but do not order it. I pray and beseech you, do not order it.'

She looked so humble, kind, and obedient as she said this, that the knight's heart was invaded by a sunbeam out of happier days. He took her affectionately by the arm, and led her into his chamber, where she spoke as follows:

'You know our wicked uncle Kühleborn, do you not, my dear lord, and have often been vexed to meet him in the passages of this castle? He has sometimes frightened Bertalda so much as to make her ill. It

seems that he has no soul, he is nothing but an elemental mirror of the outer world, which can never flash back the inner one. Well, he sees from time to time that you are displeased with me, that in my childish way I weep on account of it, that Bertalda chooses that very moment for laughter. The consequence is that he imagines all sorts of stupid things, and wants to be interfering in our affairs. What would be the use of my being cross with him, and telling him to go away? He does not believe a word I say. His poor nature has no conception of the fact that the pains and the pleasures of love are so closely intermingled, and depend so much on one another that to divide them is impossible. Smiles break forth out of the heart of tears, and tears out of eyes that are in the very act of smiling.'

She looked up at Huldbrand, smiling and weeping, and all the enchantment of the old love leaped back into his heart. She felt it, pressed him closer to her bosom, and amidst tears of joy continued:

'As the destroyer of our peace would not listen to words, I was obliged to bar the door against him. And the only door by which he reaches us is that fountain. He is at enmity with the other water-spirits of this neighbourhood; from the next valleys, and beyond the Danube, if some of his good friends have flowed into that river, his empire begins again. That is why I allowed the slab to be poised above the fountain, and wrote runes upon it, so that he should never interfere again with you, or with me, or with Bertalda. It is true that with a very slight exercise of strength human beings could remove the slab; there is nothing to hinder that. If you desire it, do as Bertalda wishes, but be sure that she does not know what it is she asks.

Naughty Kühleborn has specially aimed at her, and suppose that should happen which he always is trying to prophesy to me, and what very well might happen, without your meaning any harm by it—ah! darling, there might be no little danger for you too.'

Huldbrand was deeply conscious of the magnanimity of his charming wife, who had set about so diligently to deprive herself of her terrible protector, and had even in so doing been actuated by generous thought of Bertalda. He caught her tenderly in his arms, and said with emotion:

'The slab shall stay there, and all shall be, now and for ever, as you desire it to be, my sweetest little Undine.'

She modestly caressed him, happy once more to hear the words of love which had so long been unspoken, and at last she said:

'My dearest one, since you are so very sweet and kind to-day, may I venture to ask you for a favour? Only see, you are like the summer-time. Even in its highest splendour it puts on the flaming and thundering crown of magnificent storm, in which its aspect is that of a real monarch and earth-deity. So, every now and then, you lighten with your tongue and your eyes, and it becomes you well, even though, in my poor folly, it sometimes makes me weep. But don't ever be angry with me on a piece of water, or even when we are near any waters, for then my relations would regain authority over me. They would pitilessly snatch me from you, because they would think that one of their race was being injured, and for all the rest of my days I should have to live down there in the halls of crystal, and should never have leave to come up to you again, or, if they did send me up

to you, oh, God! that would be infinitely the worst of all. No, no, my sweet one, don't let that happen, as you love your poor Undine.'

He solemnly promised to do what she desired, and husband and wife left the chamber infinitely happy and full of mutual love. Then Bertalda came, with some workmen whom she had already sent for from the valley, and said in a sulky way, which she had of late adopted:

'Well, now the secret interview is over, the slab may come off. Go, you men, and set about it.'

But the knight, revolted by her impudence, said briefly and very sternly, 'The slab is to stay there'; and he rebuked Bertalda for being so disagreeable to his wife. On this the workmen, secretly smiling, went away, while Bertalda, pale with fury, rushed to her own room.

The hour for supper came, and no Bertalda appeared. She was sent for, but the chamberlain found her apartments empty, and brought nothing back but a note addressed to the knight. He opened it in amazement, and read:

'I feel with shame that I am nothing but a poor fisher-wench. In the wretched cottage of my parents I will expiate having forgotten this fact. Live happily with your pretty wife!'

Undine was grieved to the heart. She fervently begged Huldbrand to hasten after their fugitive friend and bring her back again. Alas! she had no need to urge it. All his old inclination for Bertalda was reawakened. He rushed all over the castle asking if no one had seen which path the lovely being had taken in her flight. He could learn nothing, and was already on horseback in the court of the castle, ready to ride

off at a venture along the road by which he had brought Bertalda on the first occasion. Just then a messenger came hurrying back to say that he had found the young lady on the path leading down into the Black Valley. Like a bolt from the bow the knight sprang to the gate to proceed in the direction indicated, without listening to the agonized voice of Undine shouting from the window:

'Into the Black Valley? Oh, not there, Huldbrand, not there! Or else, in the name of God, take me there with you!'

When she saw that it was quite in vain to appeal to him, she ordered her white palfrey to be saddled with all speed, and followed the knight without permitting a single retainer to accompany her.

CHAPTER XIV

HOW BERTALDA WENT HOME WITH THE KNIGHT

THE Black Valley lies deeply sequestered in the mountains. What it may now be called no man knows. At that time the country folk gave it its name from its deep obscurity, buried in the shadow of lofty trees, and particularly of pines. Even the rivulet which poured down between the cliffs looked quite black, and as though less pleased than waters are that have the blue heaven immediately over them. Now, as twilight was approaching, it looked singularly wild and gloomy between the heights. The knight stepped anxiously along the banks of the rivulet; he was now in terror lest, by pushing on so quickly, he might have passed the fugitive, now ready to hasten on with greater speed, in case she was concealed somewhere

in front of him. By this time he had penetrated somewhat deeply into the valley, and it was to be supposed that, if he was on the right road, he must soon overtake the maiden. The suspicion that he perhaps had missed her made his heart beat in anguish. If he should not find the tender Bertalda, what would be her fate in the threatening storm which now hung more and more ominously over the valley? At last he saw a white object on the slope of the mountain; it glimmered through the leafage. He thought he recognized the dress of Bertalda, and made straight for it. But his steed would not obey; it reared so violently, and he himself was so unwilling to lose time —especially as the thick underwood made it extremely difficult to proceed on horseback—that he dismounted, and, tying the snorting horse to a maple, carefully worked his way on foot through the bushes. The twigs cruelly whipped his brow and cheeks with the cold dews of evening, a distant thunder rumbled beyond the mountains, everything looked so sinister that he began to feel a species of awe as he approached the white shape which now lay near him on the ground. But he could quite clearly distinguish that it was the figure of a sleeping or a swooning woman, in long white garments, such as Bertalda had that day been wearing. He stepped close up to her, rustled the branches, clashed his sword—she did not move. 'Bertalda!' he said softly at first, then louder and louder—she did not hear him. At last, as he shouted the beloved name with all his might, a dull echo came faintly back from the caverns of the valley: 'Bertalda!' but the sleeper awakened not. He bowed down to her; the darkness of the valley and the approach of night forbade him to distinguish her features. But

now, as with a kind of sad uncertainty he pressed close beside her on the ground, a flash of lightning suddenly illuminated the valley. He saw quite close to him a hideous and wasted countenance, and a dull voice that cried, 'Give me a kiss, you love-sick shepherd!'

Shrieking with terror Huldbrand fled up the heights, the hideous figure pursuing him. 'Go home!' it murmured, 'the monsters are awake! Go home! I have you now!' And it clawed at him with long white arms.

'Spiteful Kühleborn!' cried the knight, summoning his confidence, 'so 'tis you, is it, you hobgoblin! There's a kiss for you!' And with that he smote it in the face with his sword. But it vanished away, and a drenching stream of water left the knight in no doubt of the nature of the enemy with whom he had contended.

'He wants to frighten me away from Bertalda,' he said to himself aloud; 'he thinks that he will frighten me by his silly tricks into abandoning the poor distressed maiden to him, to bear the whole brunt of his revenge. But that shall he not, miserable elemental spirit that he is. The impudent goblin does not realize what the heart of a man can do, when that man throws into his doing the best forces of his life.' He felt the truth of his own words, and that he had spoken under the influence of a renewal of his manly courage. Accordingly, fortune seemed once more to smile on him, for scarcely had he got back to the spot where his horse was tied, when he heard quite plainly the voice of Bertalda lamenting; she was so close to him that he could hear her weeping through the tumult of the thunderstorm. With winged feet he flew towards the sound, and discovered the shivering

lady, who was vainly endeavouring to climb the heights, in order by any means to escape from the awful obscurity of the valley. But he threw himself tenderly across her path, and, firm and proud as had been her determination, she found it impossible to resist the happiness that her beloved friend offered her in releasing her from the hideous solitude that environed her, and in begging her to share once more the bright life in his hospitable castle. She scarcely said him nay, but followed him, although so wearily that the knight was glad to reach his steed, which he now eagerly untied, proposing to lift on to its saddle the lovely fugitive, and carefully to guide it by the bridle-rein through the doubtful shadows of the valley.

But the horse had been perfectly frenzied by the rude apparition of Kühleborn. It would have been difficult for the knight himself to leap on to the back of the rearing and snorting animal: to lift the trembling Bertalda there was an absolute impossibility. Accordingly they determined to go home on foot. While the horse was pulling at the rein, the knight with his other hand supported the tottering maiden. Bertalda summoned her forces as well as she could, that she might pass quickly through the valley, but weariness weighed her down like lead, and her limbs quivered with weakness, partly from all the distress that she had undergone, from the adventure with Kühleborn, but partly also because of her incessant terror at the howling of the storm and the thunder through the mountain woodlands.

The end of it was that she slipped from the supporting arm of her guide, and, prostrate on the moss, she murmured: 'Oh! let me lie here, noble sir. I give

my folly all the blame, and now let me just perish here of weariness and distress.'

'Never, never, my sweet friend, will I abandon you!' cried Huldbrand, vainly trying to hold in with his hand his frantic steed, which was now more troublesome than ever, and was beginning to foam at the mouth. The knight was really glad to be able to hold it at a sufficient distance from the sunken lady, so that at all events she might be relieved from one element of danger. But he had gone only a few steps when she began again to wail and bemoan herself, and to call after him, fancying that he was really going to desert her in that frightful wilderness. He positively did not know what he should do. He would gladly have given the infuriated animal its full liberty to rage away into the night, and so to give vent to its madness, had it not been that he feared that in this narrow pass its metal hoofs might thunder down upon the very spot where Bertalda lay.

In the midst of all this distress and embarrassment, it was with the greatest delight in the world that he heard a wagon slowly descending the stony road behind him. He shouted for help; a man's voice answered him, begging him to have patience, and promising him assistance. Immediately he perceived two greys approaching through the bushes, and the white smock-frock of their driver by the side of them, and presently the great white linen cover which protected the goods that he was conducting. With a loud 'Brr!' from the lips of their master the docile greys stood still. He came up to the knight and helped him to subdue the foaming animal.

'I see,' he said, 'what it is that the beast wants. The first time I went this way, my horses were just as

troublesome. I must tell you that a wicked water-goblin lives here, and these jokes are what he enjoys. But I have learned a charm, and if you like me to whisper it into your horse's ear, you will find he will stand as quietly as my greys do.'

'By all means try your plan and do it at once,' cried the impatient knight. Then the carter bent the head of the rearing steed down to him and muttered some words in his ear. In an instant the horse stood appeased and perfectly quiet, while nothing but a certain heat and panting was left to show how extremely agitated it had been. Huldbrand had not much time to inquire the reason of the change. He made a bargain with the carter to take Bertalda up among the soft bales of cotton in his wagon, and to bring her to Ringstetten Castle, while the knight should accompany her on horseback. But his horse now appeared to be so much exhausted in consequence of its former violence that it had not the power to carry its master so far. The carter, therefore, recommended the knight to climb into the wagon beside Bertalda, having fastened the horse behind.

'My greys can carry us all,' said the driver. The knight took his advice, climbed into the wagon with Bertalda, and his steed followed patiently, while the driver led on with active and yet heedful care.

In the quietness of the dark night, as they left the thunderstorm more and more completely behind them, in a happy sense of security and of comfortable motion, Huldbrand and Bertalda talked confidentially to one another. He jested with her tenderly about her peevish flight; with a modest emotion she excused herself; and out of every word that she said there shone, like a lamp, the love that filled her heart as she

turned to him. The knight felt the full significance of the secret meaning of her words, and a sense of mutual and tender confidence sprang up between them.

Then the carter suddenly shouted with his screaming voice, 'Up! you greys! Up with your feet! Pull yourselves together, greys! Remember what you are!'

The knight leaned out of the wagon, and saw that the horses were stepping or rather positively swimming in the midst of a rush of water; the wheels of the cart were whirling round and round like mill-wheels, and the carter had climbed up upon the vehicle to escape the rising flood.

'What kind of a road is this? It seems to go along the bed of a river!' cried Huldbrand to the driver.

'No, sir!' he answered laughing, 'it is the other way about, it is the river that is running along the middle of our road. See for yourself what a flood there is.'

It was perfectly true; the whole valley was moving and rushing with the waters that had so suddenly gushed out and were still visibly rising.

'That is Kühleborn, the wicked water-goblin, trying to drown us!' cried the knight. 'Don't you know any charm to suit him, my friend?'

'I know one,' said the driver, 'but I cannot and must not use it until you know who I am.'

'Is this a time for asking riddles?' screamed the knight. 'The flood is rising every moment, and what do I care who you may be?'

'You ought to care,' said the driver, 'for I am Kühleborn.' So saying he thrust his withered face, laughing, into the wagon, but the wagon was a wagon no longer, the greys were greys no longer; everything vanished, melted into hissing clouds, and the very

driver himself was drawn up into a gigantic wave, which forced the vainly-struggling horse under the tide, and grew and grew like a tower of moisture ready to topple on to the heads of Huldbrand and Bertalda, and bury them for ever under the ruin of its waters.

But at that very moment the sweet voice of Undine reached them through the turmoil, the moon stepped from a cloud, and Undine became visible on the heights above the valley. She commanded, she threatened the floods, the ominous tower of waters shrank away muttering and murmuring, the streams ran gently in the moonlight; and like a white dove Undine was seen to dive downwards from the heights, to seize Huldbrand and Bertalda, and to carry them up to a fresh, green lawn on the heights, where she dispelled their weakness and terror by her assiduous cordials and caresses. Then she helped Bertalda to mount the white palfrey, which had carried her, and so all three proceeded back to Ringstetten Castle.

CHAPTER XV

THE JOURNEY TO VIENNA

After the events we have just recorded, life went quietly and uneventfully at the castle. The knight became more and more conscious of his wife's saintly sweetness, which had been so splendidly displayed by her pursuing and saving them from the power of Kühleborn in the Black Valley. Undine herself enjoyed that peace and security which are never wanting to a conscience that feels that it has acted in the right

way, and many a gleam of hope and love came to her from the reawakened love and esteem of her husband. Bertalda, for her part, was meek, grateful and modest, and she attempted to gain no advantages for herself from these manifestations. Whenever husband or wife proposed to discuss with her either the closing of the fountain or the adventures in the Black Valley, she earnestly begged to be excused, giving as her reason that the former subject embarrassed her and the latter terrified her too much. Nothing more, therefore, was said about either, and why should there be? Peace and joy had visibly taken up their abode in Ringstetten Castle. Everybody was quite certain of it, and believed that life would bring forth in future none but comely flowers and fruits.

In this delicious way winter had come and gone, and spring had peeped in upon mankind with its bright green buds and its pale blue sky. The mood of spring seemed their mood, and what wonder, then, that springtide's storks and swallows should bring them journeying thoughts?

Once, while they were serenely wondering about the source of the Danube, Huldbrand happened to discourse about the splendour of the noble river, and how it flowed through hallowed countries gathering volume as it went, and how costly wines were grown upon its banks, and how with every step of its course it clustered power and loveliness about it.

'How glorious it must be to follow its course as far as to Vienna!' exclaimed Bertalda, but no sooner had she said the words than, shrinking into herself in her present humility and modesty, she blushed and was silent. This touched Undine deeply, and in her eager desire to gratify her dear friend, she said:

'What is there to prevent our taking this journey?'

Bertalda leaped for joy, and the two ladies instantly began to paint the charming voyage down the Danube in the liveliest colours. Huldbrand offered no opposition, except that he whispered in Undine's ear:

'But if we go so far, shall not we be once more in Kühleborn's power?'

'Let him come!' she answered, laughing; 'I shall be there, and he can't do any harm in my presence.'

So with that the last difficulty vanished; they prepared for the voyage, and started in the best of spirits and with the highest anticipations.

Is it not strange that things invariably turn out other than what we expected them to be? The malignant power, which lies in wait to deceive us, loves to lull its chosen victim to sleep with sweet songs and golden stories. On the other hand the messenger that brings salvation from heaven often raps sharply and terrifying at our door.

During the earlier days of their Danube voyage they were extremely delighted. Everything seemed to grow better and lovelier as they slipped down the waters of the majestic river. But at one singularly exquisite spot, from the hospitable beauty of which they had anticipated peculiar pleasure, that unruly fellow Kühleborn gave a wholly unexpected proof of his encroaching power. It amounted at first to no more than a trick of teasing, because Undine shouted into the rebellious floods or contrary wind and instantly subdued the power of the enemy, but the opposition would rise again, and again it would be needful for Undine to check it, so that the comfort of the little company of travellers was entirely destroyed.

Soon the boatmen began for ever to be whispering

to one another, and looking suspiciously at the three gentlefolks, whose servants themselves grew more and more to realize that something very unusual was taking place, and to watch their masters with anxious countenances. Huldbrand often said to himself in the depths of his heart:

'This comes of like not being matched with like; it is a strange bond that a man makes with a mermaid.'

Excusing himself, as we are so apt to do, he would often think:

'I did not know in the least that she was a mermaid! It is a wretched thing for me that every step I take is cursed and spoiled by her absurd relations, but it is by no fault of mine.'

By thoughts such as these he would fortify himself for the moment, but these reflections always left him more fretful and even more inimical to Undine. Already he looked at her with a surly expression, and the poor lady well understood what he meant by it. Exhausted with distress at this, and not less with the constant effort to subdue the vivacity of Kühleborn, towards evening, as the boat glided gently along, she fell into a deep sleep.

But scarcely had she closed her eyes, when every one in the ship saw, on the side where he happened to be looking out, a hideous human head, which rose out of the waves, not as the head of a swimmer does, but quite perpendicularly, as though it were impaled on the surface of the water, yet proceeding at the same rate as the boat did. Each person wished to point out to the other the object which terrified him, and each perceived upon the other's face the same horror, but turned in another direction from that in which he himself saw the half laughing, half menacing apparition.

But as each wanted to explain to the others what to look at, and shouted 'Look there!' 'No, there!' the awful apparitions were observed to be everywhere, and the whole river around the vessel was swarming with these hideous figures. The shrieks of terror which this provoked awakened Undine. As her eyelids opened all the troop of wicked phantoms vanished. But Huldbrand rose in revolt at such ugly jesting. He would have broken out into wild curses, if Undine, with modest looks and gentle words of entreaty, had not said—

'For God's sake, my husband! We are on the waters, do not be angry with me.'

The knight was silenced, sat down, and sank in a deep reverie. Undine whispered in his ear—

'Would it not be better, my darling, to resign this foolish expedition, and go back in peace to Ringstetten Castle?'

But Huldbrand murmured angrily—

'So I am to be a prisoner in my own castle, and only to breathe, so long as the fountain is closed? I only wish, then, that your crazy kindred——'

But with that Undine caressingly pressed her lovely hand to his lips. He was silent again, and remained so, meditating on what Undine had said.

Meanwhile Bertalda had abandoned herself to all sorts of fugitive ideas. She knew much of Undine's origin, and yet not all, and in particular the fearful Kühleborn had remained a horrible, but always quite insoluble, riddle to her, to such an extent that she was ignorant of his very name. While reflecting on all these extraordinary things, and without being conscious what she was doing, she unfastened a golden necklace which Huldbrand had lately bought for her

from a wandering pedlar, and let it wave just above the surface of the river, diverting herself, half in a dream, with the bright shimmer that it gave, reflected in the sunset mirror of the waves. A huge hand suddenly rose out of the Danube, snatched at the necklace, and dragged it down. Bertalda screamed out loud, and a scornful sound of laughter echoed from the depths of the river. The anger of the knight now broke all bounds. Springing to his feet and staring down into the water, he cursed all who would force themselves into relation with him and his life, and called upon whomever it might be, nix or siren, to rise and face his naked sword. Bertalda wept for the loss of an ornament that she so much valued, and with her tears poured oil on the flame of the knight's anger, while Undine, leaning over the side of the boat, kept her hand in the water, which continued half to rush upwards, half to mutter with an interrupted murmur, while she said to her husband:

'My darling, don't scold me here; scold whom and what you will, but not me. You know why!'

And by a great effort he contrived to restrain himself, though he was stammering with rage, from making any direct attack upon her. Then, with her wet hand, which she had been holding under the water, she produced a magnificent coral necklace, which flashed so brilliantly that all eyes were nearly dazzled by it.

'Take this,' she said, holding it out pleasantly to Bertalda; 'I have had this brought as a compensation to you, and don't be unhappy any longer, poor child.'

But the knight sprang between them. He tore the lovely trinket out of Undine's hand, flung it back into the river, and shouted in a frenzy of rage—

'Then you are still in communication with them, are you? Stay with them and their gifts, in the name of all witchcraft, and let us mortals be at peace sorceress that you are.'

But as he looked he saw poor Undine gaze at him with eyes streaming with tears, still holding out the hand with which she had so kindly endeavoured to pass her pretty gift to Bertalda. She went on weeping, more and more bitterly, like a gentle child that has been cruelly wounded though for no fault of hers. At last she said quite wearily:

'Ah! sweet friend, ah! farewell! You ought not to have done that; but be loyal, so that I may be able to avert it from you. Ah! but now I must go, must go away out of this young life of ours. Oh woe, oh woe! what have you done, oh woe, oh woe!'

And with that she vanished over the edge of the boat. It was impossible to tell whether she stepped into the river, or was swept into it, both seemed true and yet neither. In a moment she was wholly engulfed in the Danube; only little waves kept sobbing round the bark, and seemed to be repeating, almost inaudibly: 'Oh woe! Oh woe! Ah! Be loyal! Oh woe!'

But Huldbrand flung himself in burning tears upon the deck of the vessel, and a deep swoon soon drew a merciful veil over his anguish.

CHAPTER XVI

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT TO HULDBRAND

Are we to grieve or to rejoice that our sense of affliction makes no abiding stay? I mean that of affliction which springs from so deep in the heart of life that it is

so made one with the idea of the lost beloved that all the passage of life is but a priestly initiation into the worship of one vanished form, until the moment when the bolt that fell on him crushes us also. Many good men do remain priests of this order, but yet it is not the first real affliction any longer. Other extraneous images have forced their way across us; the mutability of all earthly things affects even our anguish, and accordingly I can but say: I grieve, that our sense of affliction has no abiding hold on us.

The Lord of Ringstetten experienced this too. Whether it was to his welfare, this tale shall shortly tell us. At first he could do nothing but weep bitterly, as the poor kind Undine had wept, when he tore the bright necklace out of the hand with which she sought to restore happiness and peace. And then he would stretch out his own hand, as she had done, and would weep anew, as she had. He nourished the secret hope that he might wholly waste away in tears. And have not similar thoughts pierced us all with their painful pleasure when we have been in deep distress? Bertalda wept with him, and they lived very quietly side by side in Ringstetten Castle, honouring Undine's memory, and having almost forgotten their previous inclination for one another. And the sweet Undine now often passed into the dreams of Huldbrand. She caressed him gently and tenderly, and then disappeared still weeping, so that ofttimes when he wakened he knew not why his cheeks were so wet: were they her tears, or but his own?

But as time went by these visionary dreams grew rarer, the sorrow of the knight less poignant, and yet perhaps in his life he would never have nourished another wish than to think of Undine and to talk about

her, had it not been that the old fisherman unexpectedly made his appearance at the castle, and demanded that Bertalda should return with him as his daughter. He had heard of the vanishing of Undine, and he would not any longer consent to allow Bertalda to stay at the castle of an unmarried nobleman. 'For,' he said, 'whether my daughter is fond of me or not I will not inquire, but her reputation is at stake, and when that is the case there is nothing more to be said.'

The sentiment of the old fisherman, and the solitude which threatened to confront the knight in all the halls and corridors of his desolated castle when once Bertalda should have departed, brought to a crisis that inclination of Huldbrand's to the beautiful person of Bertalda which had hitherto been slumbering, and quite forgotten in the midst of his affliction for Undine. But the fisherman had much to urge against the proposed marriage. The old man had been deeply attached to Undine, and he considered that nobody could be positively sure that the dear vanished one was really dead. But even if her corpse should lie stark and cold on the bed of the Danube, or have been carried out to the ocean by the river, still Bertalda was responsible for her death, and it was not seemly that she should occupy the place of the dear supplanted one. But the fisherman was also very much attached to the knight; the prayers of his daughter, who had become much more gentle and amiable, as also her tears about Undine, had to be taken into consideration, and the end of it was that he had to give his consent. There was then no opposition, and a messenger was sent off in haste to Father Heilmann, who in earlier happy days had

married Undine and Huldbrand, begging him to come to the castle to celebrate a second wedding.

But the holy man had scarcely read through the letter from the Lord of Ringstetten than he set out in much greater haste towards the castle than the messenger had which came to fetch him. When on the steep path his breath failed him, or when his old limbs ached with weariness, he was wont to say to himself: 'Perhaps there is still evil to prevent! Sink not, thou withered body, till thy goal be reached!' And with renewed vigour he would resume his labour, and move onward and onward, without resting or halting, until late one evening he entered the leafy courtyard of the castle.

The bridal pair sat arm in arm under the trees, the old fisherman in a brown study at their side. Scarcely had they recognized Father Heilmann, when they leaped up and hastened to welcome him. But he, without further speech, prayed the bridegroom to pass with him into the castle. As the knight paused and delayed before obeying this serious invitation, the holy priest said:

'Why should I insist upon speaking to you in private, Herr von Ringstetten? What I have to say concerns Bertalda and the fisherman no less than it does you, and if one has to hear a certain thing it is best to hear it as soon as possible. Are you, then, Knight Huldbrand, so absolutely certain that your first wife is actually dead? I am scarcely of that opinion. I will not dwell on what may have been the extraordinary circumstances of her disappearance, for I know nothing certain about them. But she was a most faithful and loyal wife to you, there is no question about that. And for fourteen nights past she has stood

in dreams beside my bed, wringing her tender little hands in an agony, and softly sighing, "Oh, prevent it, dear Father! I am still alive! Ah! save his body! Ah! save his soul!" I knew not what this vision of the night desired. Then came your messenger, and I hurried hither, not to wed you, but to separate those who must not be together. Leave her, Huldbrand! Leave him, Bertalda! He belongs to another. And is not grief for a vanished wife still painted on his pallid cheeks? No bridegroom looks like that, and the spirit says to me, either you must quit him, or you never will be blessed.'

In their heart of hearts the trio acknowledged the truth of what Father Heilmann said, but they refused to believe it. Even the old fisherman was now so befooled that he thought nothing else could come to pass than what in these last days they so often had discussed. In a wild and melancholy precipitation they combated the warnings of the priest, until, with a sad air, shaking his head, he departed from the castle, without even consenting to put up there for a single night or enjoying the refreshments prepared for him. Huldbrand, however, persuaded himself that the priest was a creature of caprice, and sent at break of day to the neighbouring cloister for one of the fathers, who agreed, without making any objection, to celebrate the marriage in the course of a few days.

CHAPTER XVII

THE KNIGHT'S DREAM

It was between the darkness and the dawn of day that the knight lay half awake, half asleep, on his bed.

When he tried to fall wholly asleep again, it seemed to him as though a horror stood and thrust him back, because there were ghosts in the land of sleep. But if he thought completely to rouse himself, there seemed to blow about him a noise of the wings of swans and caressing sounds of pleasure, which sent his brain reeling back into its doubtful state. At last he must have fallen asleep in good earnest, for it seemed to him as if the rustling of swans seized him on soft pinions and bore him far away over land and sea, singing all the while in a most delightful melody, 'Sound of the swan! song of the swan!' More and more definitely he kept saying to himself, 'Perhaps this is death?' But probably it had another significance. Suddenly it seemed to him that he was being borne over the Mediterranean Sea. A swan was chanting harmoniously in his ear, 'This is the Mediterranean Sea.' And while he looked down on the waters they became transparent crystal, so that he could see through them down to the bed of the sea. He was glad of that, for he could see Undine, where she was sitting under the clear vault of crystal. She was weeping sorely, and looked much more sad than she did in happier hours, when he and she had lived together in Ringstetten Castle, especially at first, and towards the last, too, a little while before that luckless voyage down the Danube began. The knight could reflect on all this very thoroughly and deeply, but it did not seem that Undine was aware of his presence. Meanwhile Kühleborn had stepped up to her, and proposed to reprove her for weeping. Then she drew herself together, and gazed at him with a mien so majestic in entreaty that it almost frightened him. 'If I do live here under the waters,' she said, 'I have yet brought

my soul with me. And therefore must I weep, even if you cannot divine what such tears can be. And they are blessed, as everything is blessed to one in whom a faithful soul resides.' He shook his head incredulously, and said after some reflection, 'And yet, my niece, you are subjected to the laws of our elements, and his life must be forfeited to you if he should wed again and be to you unfaithful.' 'Until this hour he remains a widower,' said Undine, 'and bears me in love upon his aching heart.' 'Yet is he a bridegroom also,' laughed Kühleborn scornfully, 'and in a day or two the priestly benediction will be uttered, and then must you slay the husband of two wives.' 'But I can't,' Undine smiled back. 'I have sealed up the fountain, and closed it against my like and me.' 'But if he quits his castle,' said Kühleborn, 'or if one of these days he should have the fountain reopened? For you may be sure he takes very little heed of all these things.' 'For that very reason,' said Undine, and smiled once more through her tears,—'for that very reason he is now poised in spirit over the Middle Sea, and in a warning dream listens to our speech. I have deliberately so arranged it.' Then Kühleborn looked up spitefully at the knight, menaced him, stamped with his foot, and as swiftly as an arrow darted under the waves. It seemed as though rage had bloated him into a whale. The swans began to chant, to flutter, to fly, it seemed to the knight that he soared along over alps and over rivers, swooped at last to Ringstetten Castle, and awoke upon his bed.

It was true that he awoke upon his bed, and with that his squire came and told him that Father Heilmann was still lingering in the neighbourhood: he had met him in the forest the night before under the

shelter of a hut which he had constructed of the stems of trees, and had fitted up with moss and brushwood. When he asked him what he was doing there, since he would not give the benediction, he answered, 'There are other benedictions than that which is given at the marriage-altar, and, if I am not come to the wedding, it may be I shall be needed for some other ceremony. We must be ready for all chances. Besides, there is no great difference between wedding and weeping, and he who does not wilfully blind himself, has to recognize that.'

The knight fell into all manner of strange speculation with regard to these words and to his dream. But he held it to be a very strong measure for a man to break off an engagement that he had thoroughly made up his mind to, and so the end of it was that no change was made in his plans.

CHAPTER XVIII

HOW HULDBRAND CELEBRATED HIS WEDDING

When I tell you what happened at the wedding festival in Ringstetten Castle, you will have the same impression as you would if you saw a multitude of brilliant and joyful objects heaped together, but black crape spread over them, out of the obscurity of which the whole splendour should appear less like something agreeable than like a conscious mockery of all earthly felicity. It was not, however, that any spectral horror disturbed the festal gaiety, for we are aware that the castle was fully protected from the tricks of the menacing spirits of the water. But the knight and the fisherman and all the guests felt as though the

leading personage at the feast was missing, and as if this leading personage could be none other than kind Undine, the universally beloved. No door could open but all eyes involuntarily turned in its direction, and when it proved to be nobody but the master of the ceremonies with a new bunch of keys, or the cup-bearer with a draught of still more excellent wine, everybody looked before him with a disappointed air, and the sparks of gaiety and joy which had flashed out for a moment were extinguished in the dew of melancholy memory. The bride was the most light-hearted person present, and the most contented, but even over her there came from time to time a sense of wonder that it should be she who was sitting at the top of that table in a green garland and with gold-embroidered garments, while the corpse of Undine lay stark and cold on the bed of the Danube or was being carried by the river out into the ocean. For since her father had spoken those prophetic words they were for ever sounding in her ears, and to-day more than ever they would not cease to haunt her.

Night had scarcely fallen before the company broke up; not dissolved by the eager impatience of the bridegroom, as are most wedding parties, but merely forced apart, in a dull and melancholy humour, by desperate forebodings of joyless dejection and ill. Bertalda passed away with her ladies, the knight with his servants, to disrobe; at this sad festival there was no talk of any jesting troop of maids and lads to accompany the bride and bridegroom.

Bertalda wished to change the current of her thoughts. She bade them spread out before her a magnificent ornament which Huldbrand had given her, as well as rich robes and veils, that she might

choose those which would most brilliantly and becomingly enhance her morning toilette. Her maids took advantage of the occasion to chat much and gaily with their young mistress, and in their talk nothing was lacking which could enhance the beauty of the newly wedded pair. They were all becoming more and more absorbed in these considerations, when at length Bertalda, glancing in a mirror, sighed:

'Ah, but don't you see these freckles coming on the side of my neck?'

They looked, and they really did notice what their beautiful mistress had referred to, though they called it nothing but a beauty-spot, a little mark that merely heightened the whiteness of the tender skin. Bertalda shook her head, and thought it would always be a blemish. 'And I could get rid of it,' she sighed. 'But the castle fountain is closed, out of which they used to draw for me the water that had so rare a power to cleanse. Oh! if I could only get a bottle of it!'

'Is that all?' laughed a nimble maid, and slipped out of the room.

'She is not going to be so rash,' said Bertalda no less pleased than astonished, 'as to have the fountain-slab rolled away this very evening?' But they presently heard men crossing the courtyard, and could from the window see that the amiable maid was leading them straight to the fountain, and that they were carrying levers and other tools on their shoulders. 'I really do wish it,' said Bertalda, 'if it does not last too long.' And, secretly gratified that a hint from her could now carry so much weight, she looked down at the work as it proceeded in the moonlit courtyard of the castle.

The men heaved with all their strength at the great slab. Now and then one would sigh at the thought

that the work of their dear late mistress was being undone. But the toil proved really much less than might have been supposed. It seemed as though a force within the fountain was helping them to lift the stone. The astonished labourers said to each other, 'You would fancy that the water inside had turned into a gushing spring.' And the stone rose higher and higher, and almost without help from the labourers it slowly rolled with a dull thud upon the pavement. But at the same moment there rose from the opening of the fountain a white pillow of water high into the air. At first they thought that it really had turned into a spring, until they noticed that the soaring stream took the shape of a pale woman veiled in white. It wept bitterly, it wrung its hands in anguish about its head, and slowly, slowly it stepped towards the castle building. The castle servants started back from the fountain; the bride stood, pale and stark with terror, at the window with her maidens. When the figure was close underneath her chamber, it gazed plaintively at her, and Bertalda fancied that beneath the veil she could perceive the pale lineaments of Undine. But the lamentable figure went by, heavily, constrainedly, slowly, as if to a place of execution. Bertalda screamed to them to call the knight, but not a menial stirred from her place, and the bride herself was dumb again, as though the sound of her own voice affrighted her.

While they were still standing in horror at the window, as motionless as statues, the dreadful visitant had reached the castle, had mounted the well-known steps, had passed through the well-known hall, weeping, weeping all the while. Ah! in what a different guise she came there for the first time!

But the knight had dismissed his servants. Half undressed, he stood in painful meditation before a great mirror; the taper burned dimly at his side. Then there came a finger at the door, lightly, lightly tapping. That is how Undine would have tapped, had she pleasantly wished to call him to her. 'It is all nothing but fancy,' he said to himself. 'I must enter my bridal bed.'

'Yes, that you must, but a cold one!' he heard a weeping voice reply outside the room, and in the mirror he saw the door open, slowly, slowly, and the white wandering figure enter and carefully shut the door again behind it. 'They have opened the fountain,' she said softly, 'and now I am here, and you must die.'

He felt his heart stop beating, and knew that it was inevitable, yet covered his eyes with his hands, and said:

'Do not darken the hour of my death with terror. If you bear a horrid countenance behind that veil, then lift it not, and slay me without my having seen you.'

'Ah!' replied the wanderer, 'will you not look once more upon me? I am as fair as when you found me first upon the borders of the lake.'

'Oh! if it might be so,' sighed Huldbrand, 'and if I might only die upon a kiss of thine!'

'And so you shall, my darling,' she said. And she flung back her veil, and her sweet face smiled out of it in all its heavenly beauty.

Quivering with love and the approach of death, the knight bowed to meet her, she kissed him with a heavenly kiss, but she released him not, she pressed him ever closer and closer to her, and wept as if she

would weep away her soul. The tears flooded the eyes of the knight, and in a sweet agony of woe they so whelmed his bosom that at length they bore his breath away, and he sank back a corpse out of those lovely arms on to the cushions of the bed of rest.

'I have wept him to death!' she said to a servant who met her in the antechamber, and through the midst of the terror-stricken retainers she glided slowly out into the fountain.

CHAPTER XIX

HOW THE KNIGHT HULDBRAND WAS BURIED

Father Heilmann arrived at the castle as soon as the death of the Lord of Ringstetten was reported in the neighbourhood, and he made his appearance at the very moment when the monk who had married the luckless pair, overwhelmed with terror and horror, had fled from the gates.

'It is well,' replied Heilmann, when they told him of this fact; 'the office now falls on me, and I need no consort.' He thereupon began to bestow his consolations on the widow-bride, however little effect they might have on her essentially worldly mind. The old fisherman took the fate which had befallen his daughter and son-in-law in much better part, grieved to the soul as he was, and while Bertalda persisted in denouncing Undine as a murderess and a witch, the old man said with resignation, 'It could not have turned out otherwise. I see naught in it but God's judgement, and certainly no one could suffer more anguish from the death of Huldbrand than she whose duty it was ordained to execute it, our poor, banished Undine.'

Thereupon he set about arranging the funeral ceremonies, in due accordance with the rank of the deceased. He was to be buried in a village in whose churchyard stood the graves of all his ancestors, a village which they, as he himself, had honoured with valuable liberties and gifts. Shield and helmet lay already on the coffin, ready to be lowered into the grave, for Lord Huldbrand of Ringstetten had been the last of his race; the mourners started on their melancholy way, singing elegies in the bright, clear weather under the blue of heaven, Heilmann stepped in front with a lofty crucifix, and the inconsolable Bertalda followed, supported by her aged father. Then all were suddenly aware, in the midst of the dark raiment of the women in attendance on the widow, a snow-white figure, closely veiled, and wringing her hands in the extremity of lamentation. A secret horror seized those by whose side she walked, they drew backward or aside, by this movement still more terrifying others, at whose side the white stranger now appeared, so that agitation and confusion began to disturb the whole funeral procession. Certain soldiers were so courageous as to accost the figure, and to endeavour to thrust her from the train, but she melted under their hands, and was discovered still with slow and solemn steps sweeping onward with the funeral procession. At last, the maid-servants having all slipped out of her path, she found herself close behind Bertalda. But with that her gait became extremely slow, so that the widow was not aware of her presence, and very humbly and modestly the figure proceeded, no longer disturbed, to step on behind her.

This continued until they arrived at the churchyard, and the procession formed a circle around the

open grave. Then Bertalda perceived the uninvited guest, and, half in anger, half in terror, she started back, and desired her to quit the knight's place of rest. The veiled figure, however, gently shook her head, refusing, and raised her hands towards Bertalda as though in humble entreaty; this deeply moved the widow, and she could not but think how Undine had so kindly desired to present to her the coral necklace on the Danube. But now Father Heilmann gave a glance and commanded silence, that all might join in silent prayer above the corpse, over which a hillock had already begun to rise. Bertalda was silent, sank to her knee; and then the others knelt, even the grave-diggers, whose labour with the shovel was now done. But when they rose to their feet again, the white stranger had vanished; at the spot where she had knelt there gushed out of the sod a little spring, as bright as silver, that rippled and rippled away until it had almost wholly encircled the hillock of the knight's grave; then it ran on and flowed into a pool that lay beside the churchyard. In after ages, the dwellers in the village were used to point to this spring, and were confident in the belief that this was poor Undine in her banishment, who had contrived in this way to fold her kind arms for ever about the man she loved.

SINTRAM
AND
HIS COMPANIONS

CHAPTER I

At Drontheim in the high castle many Norwegian knights sat assembled, and having held counsel concerning the kingdom's weal drank until the midnight merrily with one another, in the sounding, vaulted hall, about the round, massy stone table.

Suddenly the awakening storm drove a wild snow-dust against the clattering windows; all the doors trembled in their oaken casements, the heavy bolts rattled violently, and the castle clock, after its many-wheeled and slowly-gnarling screech, struck one.

At this instant there flew into the hall, his hair standing on end, with an anxious scream and closed eyes, a deadly-pale boy. He placed himself behind the decorated chair of the great and mighty Sir Biorn, clung round the glittering warrior with both hands, and cried with a piercing voice: 'Knight and father! Father and knight! Death and his mate are again horribly close behind me!'

A fearful stillness lay icily over the whole assembly, save that the boy screamed over and over the terrible words.

But an old yeoman from among Sir Biorn's numerous train, called the pious Rolf, stepped up towards the afflicted child, embraced it with his arms, and prayed half singing:

> Help, Father dear,
> Thy servant here!
> I trust, and cannot trust.

Immediately the boy as if dreaming let go his hold of the great Sir Biorn, and the pious Rolf bore him

easily, as a down feather, although amidst hot tears and continued soft murmurings, out of the hall.

The lords and knights looked at one another altogether very much astonished.

Then the mighty Biorn took up his speech, and said in a somewhat wild and fiercely-laughing guise:

'Let not yourselves be misled by that strange thing of a boy. It is my only son, and has played these pranks ever since his fifth year; he is at present twelve; I therefore am now become well used to this, although at the beginning it made me somewhat uneasy. It comes too every year only once, and always about this time. But bear with me, that I have spent so many words upon my silly Sintram, and bring something wiser into the course.'

Yet awhile the silence continued. Then single voices began softly and unsteadily to renew the discourses before broken off, but without success. A pair of the youngest and most merry-hearted commenced a round song; when the storm howled and piped and whispered so strangely amidst it, that this also was soon broken off.

They now sat quite silent and almost motionless in the lofty hall; the lamp flared gloomily in the dome; the whole assembly of heroes was to the eye like lifeless, somewhat pale statues, which had been stuck into gigantic harnesses.

Then arose the chaplain of the castle at Drontheim, the only spiritual person in this circle of knights, and said: 'Dear Sir Biorn, it has now come to pass in a wonderful manner, and one surely especially ordained by God himself, that the inner eye of us all has been directed upon you and your son. You see, we cannot recall it from thence, and you would do better to

relate to us right explicitly what you know of the boy's strange goings on. Perchance the self-same serious speech which I forebode may do us good at this somewhat bewildered feast.'

Sir Biorn regarded the priest with dissatisfied looks, and returned: 'Sir Chaplain, you have in the history more part than were to be wished by you and me. Excuse us joyous Norwegian warriors from the melancholy tale.'

But the chaplain stepped with a firm and highly gentle demeanour nearer up to the knight, saying: 'Dear sir, before this, the relating or not-relating stood solely and alone with you; now, that you have thus strangely hinted at me and my part in the misfortune of your son, I must most decidedly demand of you that you recite all word for word, as it has befallen. My honour will have it so, and this you assuredly feel no less clearly than I.'

Stern, but yielding, Sir Biorn bowed his proud head, and took up the following discourse: 'It is now seven years since I with my assembled vassals held the Christmas feast. There are still some such old, venerable customs inherited by us from our ancestors: as for instance, that of placing a handsome golden image of a boar upon the table, and giving one another thereby all sorts of mirthful and honour-bringing assurances. This Sir Chaplain here, who at that time used often to visit me, was never a remarkable friend of such remnants of the mighty heathen world. Such as he might indeed stand in but bad odour in that ancestral time.'

'My exalted predecessors,' so the chaplain interrupted him, 'had much more by far to do with God, than with the world, and with God their odour was

right good. In this wise they converted your ancestors, and if I can be serviceable to you in a similar manner, even your mockery shall not eat away my will to do so.'

With a still darker look, but with a somewhat angry fear, the knight proceeded in his discourse: 'Aye, aye, promises of the invisible, and threats also from the same! Thus is it so much the easier to take away from us whatever good we see and have!—In those days, ah truly in those days, I had such still!—Strange!—At times it seems to me, as if that were already a couple of hundred years since, and I were an old man altogether outliving myself, because it is at present thus quite fearfully otherwise. But now I bethink myself: the greatest part of this noble circle must have visited me in my happiness, and have known Verena, my heavenly, my beautiful wife——'

He dashed his hands before his face, and it was almost as though he wept. The storm had ceased, soft moonbeams penetrated through the window, and laid themselves as if caressingly and soothingly around his wild-grown form. When suddenly he started on high, so that his armour clattered together fearfully, and cried with a thundering voice: 'Shall I now perchance become a monk, as she is become a nun? No, crafty Sir Chaplain, for flies of my kind your webs are too thin.'

'I know nothing of webs,' said the priest, 'openly and honourably did I six years since place before you heaven and hell, and you assented to the step which the pious Verena took. But how that is connected with the sufferings of your son, I know not, and wait for your relation.'

'Then you may wait long!' laughed Biorn fiercely. 'Sooner shall——'

'Curse not,' said the chaplain with a powerfully commanding voice, and eyes almost fearfully gleaming.

'Huzza!' cried out Biorn in wild horror, 'Huzza, Death and his mate are loose!' And in mad terror he flew out of the chamber, down the steps, and one heard him without with harsh, hideous sounds blow together his followers, and soon after dart from thence over the ice-paved castle court.

The knights separated silently, almost tremblingly. Alone, praying at the great stone table, sat the chaplain.

CHAPTER II

After some time the pious Rolf came slowly and softly in, and remained standing astonished in the now emptied hall. He had, in the distant chamber where he had laid the child again to rest, learnt nothing of the wild breaking up of his knight. The chaplain related to him what had happened in kind guise, and then said:

'But, dear Rolf, I should wish to ask you about the strange words, with which you just now lulled the sick Sintram to sleep again. They sounded so pious, and they were so assuredly, and yet I have not understood them. "I trust and cannot trust".'

'Reverend Sir,' returned Rolf, 'since my earliest childhood I remember that none of the beautiful stories in the gospel so powerfully took hold of me, as that in which the disciples could not heal the possessed boy, and the glorified Redeemer at length came down himself from the mountain, and rent asunder the bonds wherewith the evil spirit held the tormented child fast chained unto himself. I always felt as if I

must have known and cherished the boy, and in my good hours have been his playmate. And then as I came to years, the need of the father on account of his bespirited son lay upon my heart. Now all this was surely a foreboding of our poor young master Sintram, whom I love just as my own child, and now at times the words of the weeping father in the gospel bubble up from the bottom of my heart. "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief!' and something like this may I easily have sung or prayed in my alarm to-day. Dear reverend Sir Chaplain, it grows at times quite dark before my senses, when I think how a fearful speech of the father can cleave thus horribly to the poor child, but, God be praised! my faith and my hope remain uppermost.'

'Dear friend Rolf,' said the priest, 'all that you speak of the poor Sintram I only half understand, for it is unknown to me when and how the evil came upon him. If therefore no oath or other solemn word bind your tongue, then relate to me in what manner this took place.'

'With all my heart,' returned Rolf. ' I have long yearned to do so; but you were almost entirely departed from us. Only at present I dare not leave the sleeping boy longer alone, and to-morrow at daybreak I must convey him after my lord. Were you but to come with me to the good Sintram, dear sir?'

The chaplain immediately himself took up the little lamp which Rolf had brought with him, and they walked through the long arched passages from thence.

In the little distant chamber they found the poor boy sleeping fast. On his face, already without that very pale, the rays of the lamp fell quite strangely.

The chaplain remained for a long time standing before him in deep thought, and said at length:

'It is true, he bore even from his birth somewhat hard and sharply formed features, but now he looks almost terrible for a child. And yet one must love the honest sleeper, one may will it or no.'

'Quite right, dear reverend sir,' returned Rolf; and one saw in him how his soul was at hand, when any word was spoken favourable to his dear young master Sintram. Thereupon he placed the light so that it could not dazzle the boy, led the priest to a comfortable seat, and taking a place opposite to him began to speak after the following manner:

'It is now seven years ago, that on the Christmas-feast there was much discourse between my lord and his warriors concerning the German merchants, and how one might repress the pride of the ever mightier seaport towns. Then Sir Biorn stretched forth his hands towards the evil boar image of pure gold, and vowed without any pity to put to death the German merchants, whom their destiny, in whatsoever manner it might be, let fall alive into his power.

'The gracious Lady Verena turned pale and tried to interrupt him, but it was too late; the bloody word was out. And instantly, as if the tyrant of the dark place must immediately fasten upon his forfeited vassal with many bonds at once, there came at the selfsame moment a warder into the hall, and announced that two citizens of a German merchant-town, an old man and his son, had been stranded near the castle, and were standing without claiming the protection of its lord.

'This struck icily upon the soul of the knight, but he believed himself to be bounden by his word of honour

and by the accursed heathenish golden boar. We servants received orders to assemble ourselves with sharply pointed steel lances in the castle court, in order thus at the first signal speedily to dispatch the poor claimants of our protection.

'For the first time, and also, I hope, for the last time in my life, I said No to the command of my lord. And I said it quite loud and with cheerful resolution. The dear God, who must surely know best whom he will have in his heaven and whom not, furnished me with steadfastness and strength.

'And lo then Sir Biorn could perceive, whence the resistance of his old servant came, and that such things were to be held in honour. He spake half in wrath, half in mockery: 'Go up to the windows of my lady. The maids are running in alarm to and fro; she may be unwell. Go up, Rolf the pious, I tell thee, so women and women will come together.'

'I thought: "do thou only mock me!" and went silently my appointed way.

'Then there met me upon the stairs two strange and right fearful persons, whom I had never yet seen; I know not too how they came into the castle. The one was long and large, and looked terribly pale, and very, very gaunt; the other was a little manikin with quite hideous features and mien. Yea, as I collected myself and looked at them closely, it verily seemed to me——'

A low whining and shuddering of the boy interrupted the discourse. Hastening to him, Rolf and the chaplain saw how a fearful dread lay upon his countenance, and his eyes wished convulsively to open themselves and could not. The priest drew the cross over him; then by degrees the strange perturbation

quieted itself, the child slept tranquilly, and they both went softly back again to their seats.

'You see it breeds no good to describe the two fearful Ones more closely,' said Rolf. 'Enough, they walked down towards the court, and I up to the chambers of my mistress. And truly the gentle Lady Verena was half in a fainting fit from terrible alarm, and I hastened to stand by her with the insight, which the dear God has committed to me, of the healing powers in herb and air and stone. But scarcely was she somewhat recovered, when she instantly ordered me with the still holy power which you know in her, to attend her down into the court; she must turn away the horror of this night, or herself perish together with it. We were forced to pass the little bed of the sleeping Sintram: Oh God, the hot tears fell from my eyes, as he breathed so stilly and tranquilly, and smiled in his friendly slumber.'

The old squire held his hand over his eyes and wept bitterly. Then he again proceeded more collectedly:

'We approached the windows of the lower stairs, when we plainly distinguished the voice of the elder of the two merchants, and his noble countenance was also clear to me through the bars by the torchlight, and beside him the blooming head of his son. "I call the Lord God to witness," he cried out, " that I thought to do no evil unto this house. But I must surely have fallen into the midst of heathendom, instead of into the castle of a Christian knight, and if it be so, then only strike, and thou, my heart's dear son, die patiently and steadfastly: in Heaven we shall learn, why it could not be otherwise." I thought that I saw the two fearful Ones also in the throng of warriors.

The pale one had a large sword like a scythe in his hand; the little one a strangely jagged spear.

'Then Verena tore open the window, and cried as with a flute's tones through the wild night: "Dear lord and husband of my soul, for your only child's sake have pity upon these pious men! Save them from death, and resist the temptations of the evil spirit!"—The knight answered—let me not say what. He set his child upon the cast, he called upon Death and Devil, if he held not his word—Hush! The boy shudders now again. Let me bring the dark tale speedily to a close.

'Sir Biorn ordered his servants to strike, and beckoned to them with such horribly burning looks, that he is thence at times still called Biorn Flame-eye; at the same time the two fearful strangers showed themselves very busy. Then cried Verena with piercing agony "Lord, my Redeemer, help!" And both the forms of dread had vanished, and wildly, as if blinded, the knight and his castle crew tossed against one another, without injuring themselves, but also without being able to strike the endangered merchants. The latter bowed reverently to Verena, and walked silently praying out of the castle gates, which just then, struck by a snowy whirlwind, were suddenly driven out of their fastenings, and left the way into the mountains free.

'My mistress and I stood yet as doubting upon the stairs; then was it unto me, as if I saw the two dreadful forms sweep close by me, only quite loosely, softly, and vapour like, but Verena called to me: "In God's name, hast thou also seen the large, pale man, and the little hideous one, who hopped by here up the staircase?"—I flew after them, alas, and found the poor

boy in the very state, wherein a few hours since you saw him.

'Since then it always comes again about this season, and altogether my young master is strangely changed from that time hitherto. The lady of the castle saw the visible punishment and admonition of the heavenly powers in this event, and because Sir Biorn also from day to day, instead of turning back, became ever more and more Biorn Flame-eye, she thought that it was solely and alone within the walls of a convent, that she could obtain by prayer eternal blessedness and temporal salvation for herself and her poor child.'

Rolf was silent, and the chaplain said after some musing:—'Now I conceive, why six years ago Sir Biorn chose rather to acknowledge his sinfulness to me without further explanation, and assented to my confessing child's wish for the convent. A remnant of shame must surely have still then lived in his heart, and lives there yet perchance. At all events the tender flower of heaven, Verena, might not remain longer in the neighbourhood of this hurricane. But who shall now protect and save the poor Sintram?'

'The prayers of his mother,' returned Rolf. 'Look you, reverend sir, when the early dawn thus draws over us, as now, and the morning air thus whispers through the glowing window—then it always seems to me, as if I saw the dear eyes of my mistress shine, as if I heard the gently breathing sound of her voice. The pious Lady Verena next to God will help us.'

'And also our reverent calling upon the Lord,' added the chaplain, and he and Rolf knelt fervently and silently praying in the first morning glow beside the bed of the pale boy, who began to smile in his dreams.

CHAPTER III

The sun already sparkled brightly into the chamber, when Sintram started up, as if hurt by its rays. He regarded the chaplain with a look of displeasure, and said: 'So a priest is here in the castle? And yet the accursed dream dares to torment me in his neighbourhood! He must be a pretty priest indeed!'

'My child,' replied the chaplain with great gentleness, 'I have prayed very heartily for thee, and will now and evermore do so, but God alone is almighty.'

'You speak very confidently to the son of Sir Biorn,' cried Sintram. ' "My child! And thou, and thou!"—Had not the hideous dream come to me again this night, you would make me laugh heartily.'

'Young master Sintram,' said the chaplain, 'that you recognize me not again, by no means surprises me, for in truth I also recognize not you again.'—And at this his eyes grew moist.—But the pious Rolf looked mournfully in the boy's face, saying: 'Ah dear young master, you are so infinitely better, than you make yourself; but wherefore do you so? And do you then no longer at all bethink yourself—you have at other times so good a memory—of the pious friendly Sir Chaplain, who in days of yore ever came to our castle, and gave you bright pictures of saints and pretty songs?'

'That I well know still,' returned Sintram thoughtfully. 'In those days my blessed mother yet lived.'

'Our gracious lady lives yet ever, God be praised!' smiled the friendly Rolf.

'Not for us, not for us sick people!' cried Sintram. 'And wherefore wilt thou not call her blessed? She assuredly knows nothing of my dreams.'

'Yes, she knows thereof, young master!' said the chaplain. 'She knows thereof, and calls upon God in your behalf. But be you wary with your wild, upspringing disposition. It might, ah! it might nevertheless perhaps once happen, that she should know nothing of your dreams, and that would be, when body and soul are separated, and then all holy angels would also know nothing more of you.'

Sintram sank as if thunder-stricken back upon his couch, and Rolf sighed softly: 'you should not address my sick child thus with such severity, my reverend sir.'

Then the boy raised himself with tearful eyes, fondly caressed the chaplain, and said: 'Let him do it, thou good, gentle-hearted Rolf; he knows right well, what he is about. Wouldest thou scold him, if I were gliding into a snow rift, and he plucked me back again suddenly and forcibly by the hair?'

The priest looked with emotion upon him, and was just thinking of uttering some pious reflections, when Sintram leaped wonderingly from the bed, and asked after his father. On the tidings of his departure, he also would not tarry another hour in the castle, and dismissed the chaplain's and the old squire's anxiety, whether a sudden journey might not injure his scarcely restored health, by saying:

'Reverend sir, and dear old Rolf, believe me, if there were no dreams, I should be the hardiest young fellow upon God's earth, and even as it is, I give in but little to the best. Besides till another year at this time my dreaming is at an end.'

On his somewhat imperative command Rolf immediately brought out the horses. The boy boldly sprang upon the saddle, and affectionately greeting

the chaplain darted swift as an arrow into the smooth valleys of the snow-covered mountainous region.

He had not yet ridden far with his old follower, when he heard a dull noise out of a nigh chasm in the rock almost like the clattering of a small mill, and between it at intervals the hollow, anxious moan of a human voice. They turned their horses thitherward, and a strange sight revealed itself unto them.

A tall, deadly-pale man, like a pilgrim to look upon, was vainly striving with violent efforts to work himself out of the deep snow up the hill, and meanwhile a multitude of bones, which he bore loosely attached to his broad garment, rattled with strange sound against one another, and brought forth that mysterious clattering.

Rolf, livelily terror-stricken, crossed himself, and the bold Sintram cried out to the stranger: 'What art thou about there? Give an account of thy lonely doings!'

'I live in dying,' returned he with a fearful grin.

'Whose are the bones on thy clothes?'

'They are relics, young master.'

'Art a pilgrim then?'

'Ceaseless, restless; up the land, down the land.'

'Thou shalt not perish here in the snow.'

'That will I not.'

'Thou shalt place thyself beside me on my horse.'

'That will I.'

And instantly with unexpected strength and nimbleness he was up out of the snow, and sat behind Sintram, embracing him with his long arms, upon the horse, which started at the clattering of the bones, and, as if seized with a frenzy, galloped thence through the most pathless valleys. Soon the boy found himself alone with his strange companion; in the far distance

the terrified Rolf vainly spurred and puffed after the on-rushing pair.

After gliding down from a snow-covered mountain-wall, but without falling, the steed became somewhat fainter in a narrow chasm, and though he yet frothed and foamed as before, and the boy was still unable to master him, yet his breath-stopping course changed itself into a wild, irregular trot, and there arose between Sintram and the stranger the following discourse:

'Thou pale man, draw thy garments in tighter; so the bones will not clatter, and I shall tame my horse.'

'It boots not, my boy, it boots not: the bones have got a way of so doing.'

'Squeeze me not so tightly with thy long arms. Thine arms are so cold.'

'Can not otherwise, my boy, can not otherwise. And be content. Still my long cold arms will not squeeze in thy heart.'

'Blow not so upon me with thy frozen breath. Thereat all my strength is going from me.'

'Must blow, my boy, must blow. But bewail not thyself. I shall not yet blow thee away.'

The strange discourse had an end, for contrary to expectation Sintram came out upon a bright sun-illumined snow plain, and saw the castle of his father lying at a short distance from him. While still musing, whether he should and might invite the ghastly pilgrim to go with him, the latter relieved him from all doubt by suddenly springing from the horse, which halted in its wild speed surprised. Thereupon he said to the boy with upraised forefinger:

'I know the old Biorn Flame-eye very well; only

perhaps more than all too well. Greet him from me. My name he does not need to learn. He will know me already from the description.'

Herewith the pale stranger turned into a close fir-copse, and vanished rattling amidst the thickly interwoven branches.

Slowly and thoughtfully Sintram rode upon his now altogether quiet and exhausted steed, step by step towards the hall of his fathers. He scarcely knew aright, what he had to relate of his wonderful journey, and what not; moreover his anxiety for the pious Rolf who had remained behind, pressed powerfully upon his heart; when he found himself, before he yet thought of it, at the castle gate. The bridges rattled down, the doors opened; a servant conducted the young master into the great hall, where Sir Biorn sat quite alone at a very large table, behind a number of flasks and goblets, as it were built round with erected harnesses. Such namely was his way of having company daily, that he let the armour suits of his ancestors with closed visors stand and sit round about his table.

And father and son began to discourse with one another in following guise:

'Where is Rolf?'

'I know not, Sir father. He strayed from me in the mountains.'

'I will have Rolf shot, because he knows not better to guard my only child.'

'Then may you, Sir father, have your only child shot with him; for without Rolf I know not how to live, and where an arrow, or any other dart is to fly at him, there will I place myself in the way of the pointed weapon, and guard with my thoughtless breast his faithful pious heart.'

'So?—Ha, then Rolf shall not be shot, but I will drive him from the castle.'

'Then may you, Sir father, see me also run away with him from thence, and I will serve him as his faithful squire, in forest and mountain and vale.'

'So?—Aye, then truly Rolf must remain here.'

'That think I too, Sir father.'

'Hast thou travelled quite alone?'

'No, Sir father, but on the contrary with a strange pilgrim; he said, he knew you well, or truly all too well.'

And hereupon Sintram began to relate and to describe all that was known to him of the pale man.—'I know him too right well,' said Sir Biorn. 'He is half mad, half wise, as such things truly are at times wont to meet together most strangely in us men. But thou, my boy, betake thyself to rest after thy wild journey. Thou hast my word of honour, that Rolf shall be well and kindly received, yea shall even be sought for in the mountains, in case he remains out too long.'

'I rely upon you, Sir father,' replied Sintram half humbly, half sullenly, and did according to the dark castle lord's command.

CHAPTER IV

Towards evening Sintram awoke again. He saw the good Rolf sitting by his couch, and smiled with unwonted childly cheerfulness into the friendly countenance of the faithful-hearted old man. Soon, however, his dark eyebrows drew together somewhat sullenly, and he asked:

'How did my father receive thee, Rolf? Did he say an unkind word to thee?'

'Not just that, dear young master. Rather he did not speak to me at all. At first he looked at me quite angrily; then he constrained himself, and ordered a servant to refresh me well with wine and food, and afterwards to conduct me hither unto you.'

'He might have kept his word better. But he is my father, and one must not weigh things so nicely.—I will to supper.'

At the same time he sprang up, and threw on his fur cloak. But Rolf stepped entreatingly into his way, and said: 'Dear young master, you would do better to eat in your chamber to-day. With your father is company, in which I like not to see you. I will tell you too pretty stories and songs.'

'That I should like above all other things in the world, dear Rolf,' returned Sintram. 'Only it is not given unto me to avoid any man whatsoever. Tell me, whom should I find then with my father.'

'Ah, young master,' said the old man, 'you have already found him in the mountains. Aforetime, while I was yet forced to ride about with Sir Biorn, we also now and then met him, but I would not tell you any thing of him, and in the castle he is arrived to-day for the first time.'

'So, so! The mad pilgrim!' replied Sintram, and remained awhile standing in deep thought, as if reflecting. At length he suddenly started up and said: 'Thou good old friend, I would much rather remain this evening quite alone with thee and thy stories and songs; and all the pilgrims in the whole world should not entice me away from this quiet chamber. Only one thing is to be considered here. I feel a kind of shyness of that pale, pine-high man, and such things a knight's son must not suffer to have place in him.

Be not angry with me, my Rolf, but I must now thoroughly look the pilgrim into his wondrous face.'

And herewith he closed the chamber door, and walked with strong, sounding steps towards the hall.

The pilgrim and Sir Biorn sat opposite to one another at the great table, on which many torches burnt, and it was strange to behold, how amidst the many lifeless harnesses the two high and pale forms moved and ate and drank.

While the pilgrim looked round towards the entering boy, Sir Biorn said: 'Him you already know; it is my only child, and your travelling companion of this forenoon.'

The pilgrim fastened a long look upon Sintram, and returned, shaking his head: 'that I yet should not at all know it!'

Here the boy interrupted him impatiently: 'now I must confess, you share into very unequal portions! You believed you knew my father all too well, and me, as it seems, you know all too ill. Look me in the face. Who let you ride with him on his horse, and whose good horse did you in return startle and madden? Speak, if you can!'

Sir Biorn smiled shaking his head, but very well contented, as he was ever wont to be with the wildest behaviour of his son. The pilgrim on the contrary, full of anxious alarm, drew himself together, as if a fearfully over-mighty power threatened him. At last in almost silly dismay he brought forth the words: 'Yes, yes, my dear young hero, you are most perfectly right; you are quite right in all, whatsoever you may choose to bring forward.'

Here the castle lord laughed out loudly, and cried; 'Hey pilgrim man, hey man of wonders, how is it then

now with thy strangely arrogant admonitions and sayings? Has the boy thus at once made thee dumb and faint? Guard thyself, thou prophet messenger, guard thyself!'

But the pilgrim cast over a fearful look at Sir Biorn, before which his Flame-eyes almost threatened to go out, and spake with solemn, thundering voice: 'Between thee and me, my old man, it is another thing. We have nothing to reproach one another with. And listen awhile; I will sing thee a little song to the lute.' —He stretched back his hands, where there hung from the wall a forgotten, scarcely half-stringed guitar, which however he with wonderful power and skill was able after a few touches to put into order again, and began this song to the deep, melancholy tones of the instrument:

The flower was my own, was my own!
But I gambled away my heavenly right;
But I to a servant am changed from a knight,
Through my sin, through my sin alone.
The flower was thy own, wast thy own!
Why held'st thou not fast to thy heavenly right?
Thou servant of sin, no longer a knight,
Now art thou thus drearily lone.

'Beware,' cried he then with yelling voice, and tore the strings thereto violently, that they all burst asunder again with a wailing shriek of sorrow, and a cloud of dust gushed strangely up out of the woodwork of the old guitar, surrounding the singer as with a vapoury cloud.

Sintram had looked at him sharply during the singing, and it seemed to him at last incomprehensible, that this man could be one and the same with his travelling companion. Yea, the doubt mounted in

him almost to the certainty of a change, when the stranger again looked round at him with anxious dismay, excusing himself and bowing deeply hung the guitar in its old place, and then ran out of the hall dismally alarmed, in strange contrast with the high-spirited, solemn aspect, which he had borne towards Sir Biorn.

Upon the latter the boy's eyes now fell, and he saw him leaning back lifeless in his seat, as if stricken with an apoplexy. Sintram's shriek called the pious Rolf and other servants into the hall, and only after laborious painstaking did the castle lord awaken before their united efforts, although with ever bewildered looks, and quietly and yieldingly allow himself to be laid to rest.

CHAPTER V

The knight, at other times so thoroughly healthy, was visited after this singular accident by a sickness, during which he evermore talked disorderedly, but with full assurance declared, he should and must recover. He laughed contemptuously at his attacks of fever, and scoffed at them for venturing thus powerlessly and without need to assail him. Oftentimes also he murmured unto himself: 'that was not the right one yet, that was not the right one; there must be still another out in the cold mountains.'

At these words Sintram every time involuntarily started. They seemed to him to confirm his suspicion, that he who had ridden with him on one horse, and he who had sat at table in the castle, were two quite different persons; and he knew not wherefore, but this thought had something intensely fearful for him.

Sir Biorn recovered, and seemed to have entirely forgotten the history of the pilgrim. He hunted in the mountains, he fought out many a wild feud, and the up-growing Sintram became his almost hourly companion, while with every year a fearful strength of body and of mind unfolded itself more and more in the youth. He was regarded with awe, wherever he showed himself with his pale, sharp face, his dark, rolling eyes, his tall, nervy, somewhat spare form; and yet nobody hated him, not even such as in his wildest humours he had affronted or injured. It might also proceed from the friendly neighbourhood of the old Rolf, who always retained a softening influence over him; but most of those, who had known the Lady Verena, while she yet lived in the world, asserted that over Sintram's altogether dissimilar features there yet hovered a soft gleam of his mother's gentleness, and won their hearts towards the youth.

Once, it was just about the beginning of spring, Biorn and his son had hunted on the sea-shore, and that upon foreign domains: less for the sake of their pleasure in the chase, than in order to bid defiance to a hated neighbour, and thus perhaps to kindle a feud. Sintram was about this season, when he had just withstood his yearly, fearful winter dream, usually still wilder and greedier for battle than at other times. To-day it vexed him bitterly, that the foe did not come out of his castle, to forbid their hunting with armed hand, and he execrated with the fiercest expressions his tame patience and effeminate peaceableness. Just then a young, impetuous trooper among his train galloped shouting up to him, and cried; 'Be of good cheer, dear young master! I wager all will still go, as you and we desire it. I was spurring after a wounded

wild beast along the sea-shore, when there floated towards me sails and a vessel with brightly armed men. What are the odds, but your foe thinks of falling upon you from the side of the coast?'

Merrily and secretly Sintram called together all his hunting companions, resolved this time to take the combat upon himself quite alone, and then march victorious with prisoners and conquered arms to greet his father with a bold surprise.

Well acquainted with all the hollows, copses, and cliff tracks of the shore, the hunters had quickly concealed themselves round about the anchoring place, and already the strange vessel rocked nearer with swelling sails, already it lay quietly in the bay, and the seafarers began in mirthful carelessness to mount upon the land.

Glorious and noble above them all appeared a knight in blue steel armour, richly decorated with gold. His uncovered head—(he bore his costly, entirely golden helmet hanging from his left arm)—gazed kingly-wise around, and pleasant was his face to behold, curled round with dark brown hair, with gracefully pointed whiskers, beneath which his fresh mouth smiled forth, and allowed two rows of pearl-white teeth to be seen.

The young Sintram felt as if he had already seen this hero in some other place, and he stood awhile motionless. But suddenly he raised his arm to give the appointed signal for attack. In vain the pious Rolf, who had just now with difficulty reached the wild youth, whispered in his ear, that these were by no means the foes whom he expected, but unknown and assuredly highly noble strangers.—'Be they who they will!' murmured back the enraged Sintram: 'they

have whetted me into foolish expectation, and shall repent it. Say not aught against it, as thou lovest thy life and mine.' And instantly he gave the sign, and thick as hail, hurled spears whizzed on every side, and the Norwegian warriors rattled forward with lightening swords.

They found opponents as brave as they could ever wish for themselves, and perhaps even something beyond it. More of the assailers than of the assailed lay instantly in blood, and the strangers seemed to understand the Northern way of fighting surprisingly well. The knight in the steel harness decorated with gold had not been able in the hurry to cover himself with the helmet, but it was as if he did not once deem it worth the trouble. His gleaming sword guarded him safely enough; yea, he even knew how to catch the flying spears therewith, as he swung it round with lightning speed, and so forcibly to beat them off, that they sometimes fell cracked in twain upon the ground.

Sintram had at the beginning been unable to press forward to him, because all hungering for the seizure of such a prey kept crowding together around the glittering hero; but now, wherever the stranger might turn, the way was broad enough, and Sintram sprang towards him with his high-swinging sword shouting a war cry. 'Gabrielle!' cried the knight, and easily catching the mighty stroke, ran in upon Sintram, stretched him upon the ground with a stupendous thrust of his sword-hilt against his breast, and instantly knelt down upon him clenching a lightening dagger immediately before the eyes of the astonished youth. Like walls his quickly banded warriors stood all of a sudden round about him; Sintram seemed lost without hope.

He resolved to die as becomes a bold warrior; he therefore stared upon the nigh weapon of death unshaken by it, with large, widely opened eyes.

Now, while he was thus gazing upwards, it was unto him as if there appeared suddenly in the sky a wondrously beautiful woman's form in garments of heavenly blue glittering with gold. 'Truly our ancestors were after all in the right about the Valkyrier!' murmured he. 'Strike, thou conquering stranger!'

That, however, the knight did not, nor had any Valkyria shown herself, but the beautiful housewife of the stranger hero, who had just now stepped forward upon the high brink of the ship, and thus shone into the eye of the upward-looking Sintram.

'Folko,' cried she with sweet voice, 'thou high baron without reproach! I know thou sparest the vanquished.'

Up sprang the hero with noble courtesy, stretched forth his hand to the conquered youth, and said:

'Thank the noble lady of Montfaucon for thy life and thy freedom. Art thou, however, so utterly bare of all good, that thou wouldest begin the battle yet another time: lo, here I stand, do thou fall upon me!'

But Sintram sank deeply ashamed upon his knees, and wept, for he had long since heard of the renown of this his kinsman, the Norman knight, Folko of Montfaucon, and of the loveliness of his gentle housewife Gabrielle.

CHAPTER VI

The baron looked wonderingly upon his strange foe; but as he more and more regarded him, recollections mounted up within him, admonishing him of the

Northern stem, wherefrom his ancestors had branched, and with which he had always held a friendly intercourse. A golden bear's claw buckling together Sintram's upper garment at last made all certain to him.

'Hast thou not,' asked he, 'a high and mighty cousin, called the sea-king Arinbiorn, who wears vulture's wings of beaten gold upon his helmet? And is not thy father Sir Biorn? For I conceive, that the bear's claw upon thy breast is a family and heraldic token.'

Sintram confirmed all this with deep, humble shame.

The knight of Montfaucon then gravely raised him up, and said softly: 'Then we are kinsmen to one another; but never should I have thought, that any member of our honourable house could have fallen upon a peaceful man without all cause, and yet moreover without a warning.'

'Slay me,' returned Sintram, 'in case I am yet worthy to die by such noble hands. I can no longer look upon the light of the sun.'

'Because thou art vanquished?' asked Montfaucon.

Sintram shook his head in denial.

'Or because thou hast committed an unknightly deed?'

The youth's burning blush of shame said Yes.

'Then must thou not wish to die,' continued Montfaucon, 'rather make amends for thy failing, and glorify thyself by many noble actions. Lo, thou art blessed with bravery and strength of body, and doubtless also with the eagle-eye of a commander. I would strike thee a knight without more ado, hadst thou fought in a good cause, even as now thou hast in a bad

one. Act in such manner that I may speedily do it. There may still be made of thee a vessel of high honour.'

A mirthful sound of hautboys and silver cymbals interrupted the discourse. Gabrielle, beautiful as the morning, came on the shore followed by her women, and being informed by Folko in a few words who his late opponent was, she took the whole fight as a prize combat, saying: 'You must not let yourself be cast down, noble sir, that my wedded lord has won the prize, for know, that upon the whole earth there lives unto this hour only one single hero, from whom the Baron of Montfaucon has not borne away the victory. And who knows,' continued she half playfully, 'how that too might have turned out, but he was purposed in those days to win from me my magic ring, from me, who yet was assigned unto him as his lady by God and by my own heart.'[1]

Folko bowed smiling over the snow-white hand of his affectionate mistress, and then desired the youth to conduct him to the castle of his father. Rolf undertook the care about the unlading of the horses and valuables in great joy, for it seemed to him, as if a female angel had appeared, in order to soften his dear young master, and to heal him also from every earlier curse.

Sintram had sent messengers round about to seek his father, and to announce the noble guests to him. They therefore found Sir Biorn already in his castle, and everything prepared for their festive reception. Gabrielle entered with some shuddering into the

[1] This alludes to an incident in *The Magic Ring*, a romance by La Motte Fouqué, wherein many of the same characters are introduced.

heaven-reaching dark edifice, and looked still more timidly upon the rolling flame-eye of the castle lord; the pale, dark-haired Sintram too now seemed to her very terrible, and she sighed unto herself: 'O, to what a dismal visit, my knight, hast thou conducted me! O, that we were there at home in my blooming Gascony, or in thy knightly Normandy!'

But the solemnly noble reception, the deep, truly respectful submission before her loveliness, and the knight of Montfaucon's glory, raised up her spirits again, and soon was her nightingale-like delight in everything new quite pleasingly awakened by the unwonted, significant appearances of this strange world. Besides, every womanly timidity could only tremble through her for a moment, when near unto her lord. She knew too well beneath what a mighty hero's protection the high Baron of Montfaucon held all that was dear to him and entrusted to his care.

Through the great hall, wherein they had seated themselves, Rolf now passed with the servants of the strangers and their baggage up towards their apartments. Gabrielle observed in passing her graceful lute, and ordered a page to bring it to her, that she might try whether the beloved instrument had not suffered too much by the voyage. As she now tuning it, and bending over it with tender attention, let her wondrously beautiful fingers trip up and down the bright strings, a smile, like the light of spring, passed over Biorn's and Sintram's dark faces, and both sighed involuntarily: 'O, if she would play and sing a little song thereto! That would be all too beautiful!' The flattered lady looked up towards them smiling, nodded with friendly assent, and sang to the strings of her lute:

When the flowers are appearing
In the blithe month of May,
Returns the gay strain,
Each thing returns again—
But one thing, ah one thing, has passed away.
That one thing, too well I know what to call,
Yet can I not, will I not speak it,
For once 'twas so kind unto me above all,
And now in vain, in vain I seek it.
Thou beautiful nightingale quaver not so
To thy mate amid blossoms calling,
There 's pain and woe
To my heart in thy voice's gay swelling and falling,
Ah quaver not so!
For the flowers are appearing,
And on clouds careering
The blossomy May,
And the one thing, the one thing so fine,
O woe, which before was mine!
That is away.

The two Norwegian heroes sat sunken in an unexampled manner in melancholy musings. Sintram's eyes especially gleamed mildly, his cheeks were softly tinged with red, and all his features were softened, so that he might almost be regarded as one glorified. At this the pious Rolf, who had remained standing during the song, rejoiced with his whole heart, and raised his old faithful hands up to the dear God, thanking him right fervently.

But Gabrielle in her astonishment could no more look away from Sintram. At length she said: 'My young sir, now let me know what has moved you so very much in this little song? It is nothing at all, but a mere simple lay of spring, such as the beautiful season calls forth by thousands with slight changes

and the repetition of the selfsame images in my birth-place.'

'Have you such a birth-place, so highly wonderful, so measurelessly rich in songs?' cried Sintram with enthusiasm. 'O then your more than earthly beauty no longer surprises me, no longer the power which you exercise over my rugged, bewildered heart; for it is clear, that a paradise of songs must send forth such angel messengers over the rest of the yet unformed world.'

And at the same time he sank with deep, courteous humility upon both his knees before the beautiful lady.

Folko smiled complacently upon him, but Gabrielle seemed in anxious confusion not to know what was to be done with the young, half wild, half tamed Norwegian. After some consideration, however, she stretched out her fair hand to him, and said, gently raising him up: 'One who finds so much delight in song, must surely also know how to awaken it right pleasantly. There, take my lute, and let us hear some beautiful, spirited lay.'

But Sintram gently waved back the delicate instrument, and said: 'God preserve these gentle sounds, these slender strings from my unruly hand! Even if I would flatter them friendly at the beginning, yet at length in the swing of the tones my wild indwelling spirit would come upon me, and it would be all over with the voice and with the shape of the lovely lute. No, allow me to fetch my mighty harp, with its strings of bear's nerves, and its brass-bound casement. For in truth I do feel myself inspired to sing and to play.'

Gabrielle whispered half smiling, half terrified, her Yes, and swift as an arrow had Sintram borne in his strange instrument, and began to its echoing, deeply

powerful sounds with no less powerful voice the following song:

'Whither, thou knight, o'er the stormy sea?'
'My sails are spread for the south countree.'
  O thou land with the beautiful blossoms!
'I have waded about long enough through the snow,
And now will I dance where the fields are aglow.'
  O thou land with the beautiful blossoms!
By sunlight and starlight he steers away fast,
And in Naples' bay his anchor is cast.
  O thou land with the beautiful blossoms!
There a lovely-eyed maiden walks on the strand,
Her hair it is bound with a golden band.
  O thou land with the beautiful blossoms!
'God greet thee, God greet thee, thou maiden so fine!
This very day thou must be mine.'
  O thou land with the beautiful blossoms!
'My lord, I am a margrave's bride;
This very morning the knot will be tied.'
  O thou land with the beautiful blossoms!
'Let him come and make proof of his sword on the knight,
And he shall keep thee who best can fight.'
  O thou land with the beautiful blossoms!
'My lord, seek out another fere,
A garland of fair ones blossoms here.'
  O thou land with the beautiful blossoms!
'On thee my mind has once been set,
And nought in the world that mind shall let.'
  O thou land with the beautiful blossoms!
Then the margrave came down and with wrath did rave,
Then the Norman laid him in his grave.
  O thou land with the beautiful blossoms!
And thus said he merrily striking his shield,
'Now will I keep bride and castle and field!'
  O thou land with the beautiful blossoms!

Sintram was silent, but his eyes sparkled fiercely,

and the strings of the harp still ever sounded in their boldest swing and echoed in the wildest eddies. Biorn had raised himself proudly up in his seat, stroked his mighty beard and joyously rattled his sword.

Gabrielle trembled indeed at the wild song and at these strange forms, but only until she cast a look upon Sir Folko of Montfaucon, who sat smiling there in all his hero-strength, and calmly let the fierce clamour dash by him, as if it were the raging of the autumnal tempest.

CHAPTER VII

Some weeks after this Sintram came down at the evening twilight-hour very much disturbed into the castle garden. However mildly Gabrielle's presence lulled him into pious thoughts, as fearfully wild on the contrary did he feel in spirit, whenever she disappeared for an instant out of the social circle. So was it at present, after she had been long and kindly reading to his father Biorn out of an old romance book, and had now walked back again into her apartments. The voice of her lute indeed sounded down from thence into the garden, but it was as if this very sound drove the bewildered youth still more impetuously along through the shade of the hundred-yeared elms. Bending rapidly round a woody corner, he came unexpectedly quite close upon something, against which he had almost run, and which at first sight seemed to him like a little bear standing upright, with a long, strangely crooked horn upon its head. He started back dismayed, when it addressed him with a somewhat hoarse human voice: 'Knightly blood, young brave knightly blood, whence? Whither? Wherefore thus

frightened?'—and he now first saw, that he had a little elderly man before him, muffled in rough furs, so that one could distinguish little of his features, with a high, wondrous feather upon his cap.—'Whence *thou?* And whither *thou?*' cried Sintram sullenly back. 'For this is the fitting question. What hast thou to do in our castle garden, thou hideous little man?'

'Now, now,' laughed the other, 'I think; such as I am, I am just big enough. For truly one cannot always be a giant. And for the rest, what evil find you in my going about here a snail-hunting? Snails at least belong not to the noble beasts of prey, whom your experienced knighthood has reserved solely and alone for its own chase. I on the contrary know how to prepare fine, racy drinks from them, and have already caught a sufficiency for to-day: wondrous, fat creatures, with cunning, human faces, and long horns winding in an unheard of manner on their heads. Will you look at them, young master? There!'

And he unbuttoned and pulled about his fur garments; but Sintram, seized with a shuddering disgust, said: 'Fie! I hate such creatures. Have done, and give me an account instead, who and what thou really art.'

'Are you then so very much taken by names?' replied the dwarf. 'Let it suffice you that I am a learned master in each most secret knowledge, and passing rich in the oldest and most thickly tangled histories. Young master, if you were but ever to hear them!—But you are afraid of me.'

'Afraid of thee!' laughed Sintram wildly.

'It has already befallen your betters,' muttered the little Master, 'only that they were just as little willing that it should find utterance.'

'To show thee the contrary,' said Sintram, 'I will remain with thee till the moon stands high in heaven. But thou must tell me thy history.'

The dwarf nodded pleased, and while they both paced up and down a distant elm-walk, he took up his speech in the following manner:

'There was many hundred years since a handsome young knight, whom they called Sir Paris of Troy, and he was a dweller in the glowing south country, where there are the sweetest songs, the most fragrant flowers, and the most ravishing women's forms. Thou too forsooth knowest how to sing a little song thereof, young master? 'O thou land with the beautiful blossoms!' Is it not so?'

Sintram bowed his head in assent, and a hot sigh flowed from his breast.

'Now,' continued the little Master, 'this Paris had a way, such as one frequently finds there, and they know how to sing quite delicate rhymes thereof: he lived whole moons long in a shepherd's garb, and wandered round about in the woods and fields piping and feeding lambs. There once upon a time three beautiful enchantresses appeared to him, who disputed about a golden apple, and would know from him which of them was the fairest, for she should keep the golden fruit. And the one was skilled in bestowing thrones and sceptres and crowns, the other made people wise, the third could brew love-potions and utter love-charms, so that the most glorious women must be kind to one. Then each laid before the shepherdly knight her best gifts, that he might decree the apple unto her. Now he delighted in tender women far above all things in the world, and he therefore said that the third was the fairest, and she

called herself Venus. The other two departed thence in wrath, but Venus desired him to don his knightly harness again, and to put on his cap with the floating plume, and thus she conducted him to a shining castle, which was called Sparta, and the rich Duke Menelaus ruled therein with his young Duchess Helen. She was the fairest lady in all the earth, and the enchantress wished to bestow her upon Paris in return for the golden trinket. This gave Paris entire contentment, and he wished for nothing better; only the question was, how should it be brought about?'

'This Paris must have been a pretty knight!' thus Sintram interrupted the story. 'Such things are easily settled. The husband is called out to battle, and who-so wins, keeps the lady.'

'But the Duke Menelaus was bound to the knight by the rites of hospitality,' said the narrator.

'Hark, little Master,' cried Sintram, 'then he should have begged the enchantress for another fair woman, and instantly saddled his steed, or weighed his anchor, and away.'

'Aye, aye, that is easily said!' returned the old One. 'But had you only seen how ravishing the Duchess Helen was. There no change could have place.'—And with glowing words he began to paint the beauty of the wonderful woman, but feature after feature the picture resembled Gabrielle, and Sintram tottered so that he was forced to lean against a wall of trees. Then the little Master remained standing opposite to him laughing, and asked:

'How now, would you still have advised the poor Sir Paris to fly?'

'Tell me only quickly how it was,' stammered Sintram.

'The enchantress behaved honourably towards the knight,' continued the old One. 'She told him immediately beforehand, that if he carried away the beautiful Duchess to his fortress Troy, it would be his own, and his castle's, and his whole race's ruin, but that ten years long he might defend himself in Troy, and be glad in Helen's sweet love.'

'And he accepted it, or he was a dastard!' cried the youth.

'Verily,' whispered the little Master, 'verily he accepted it. And should I not have done so myself? Look you, my young hero, it came to pass then, almost as it comes to pass this very day. The just uprisen moon looked in secretly and duskily from amidst clouds through the high entangled branches of the garden trees. Leaning upon an ancestral trunk, just as you do now, stood the slim, glowing Sir Paris, and at his side the enchantress Venus, but disguised and bewitched, so that she may not have appeared much handsomer than I am. And in the silver light of the moon, through the midst of the whispering branches, there came floating towards them, in her lonely wanderings, the form of the desired, wondrously beautiful mistress.'

He was silent, and, as if in the mirror of his intoxicating words, at that very moment Gabrielle truly and verily floated towards them in lonely musing down the elm-walk.

'Man, fearful Master, what shall I call thee? What wilt thou be doing with me?'—thus whispered the trembling Sintram.

'Thou knowest thy father's mighty stone castle on the moon rock?' returned the old One. 'The warder and servants there are faithful and devoted to thee.

It will hold out a ten years' siege, and the little door here towards the mountains stands open, as the castle door in the ducal palace of Sparta did to Sir Paris.'

And truly, the youth saw through a door in the wall, unaccountably left open, the distant, thickly entangled mountains shine towards him in the moonlight.

'And,' laughed the little Master, repeating Sintram's former words—'and, if he accepted it not, he was a dastard.'

At this moment Gabrielle stood close beside him; with a slight motion of his arm he might have embraced her, and a ray of moonlight suddenly bursting forth illumined and glorified her heavenly beauty. The youth was already bending forwards:

> My God and Lord,
> Far from him ward
> Of worldly sin the furrows!
> Grant him a place
> Before thy face,
> Though after countless sorrows!

These words were sung at the selfsame instant by the old Rolf from the castle font, at the silent brink of which he was solitarily praying to heaven, full of anxious forebodings, and they penetrated to Sintram's ear, and Sintram stood as if charmed, and drew a cross, and the little Master hopped with strangely helpless speed on one leg through the door, and dashed it to jarringly behind him.

Gabrielle started back, terrified by the wild noise. Sintram softly approached her, and said, offering her his arm: 'Allow me to conduct you home into the castle hall. The night is at times somewhat awful and wild in our Northern mountains.'

CHAPTER VIII

THEY found the two knights within at their cups. Folko was relating in his wonted, friendly, lively manner, and Biorn listened somewhat darkly, but so that it seemed as if the clouds were almost against his will clearing more and more away before a pleasing contentment.

Gabrielle greeted the baron smiling, beckoned to him to continue, and took her seat beside Sir Biorn full of cheerful attention. Sintram stood gloomily and dreamily by the fire, and stirred about the coals, which cast a strange glow upon his pale countenance.

'And above all the German merchant ports,' continued Montfaucon, 'the city of Hamburgh is great and noble. We in Normandy gladly see her merchants land upon our coasts, and are ever ready to assist the pious, prudent men with word and deed. Hence was I, when I once arrived at Hamburgh, received with great honour. Besides I had just found them in a feud with a neighbouring count, and had at the very beginning used my sword for them bravely and victoriously.'

'Your sword! your knightly hero-sword!' thus Biorn interrupted him, and the old flaming glow mounted into his eye. 'Against a knight! For hawkers and pedlars!'

'Sir,' said Folko calmly, 'how the barons of Montfaucon choose to use their swords, has always stood with them, without any third person's interference, and I purpose to transmit this good custom just as I have inherited it. If this displease you, say so openly. Hereby, however, I forbid you every unbeseeming

word against the Hamburghers, who I have already informed you, are my friends.'

Biorn sank his proud eye and the glow therein died away. He said with a low voice: 'Speak on, high baron, you are in the right and I in the wrong.'

Then Folko stretched forth his friendly hand to him across the table, and continued thus in his relation:

'The dearest to me of all my dear Hamburghers are two wonderfully experienced persons, a father and his son. What have they not seen and done in the distant ends of the earth, and established in their mother-city! My life, God be praised, cannot be called altogether poor, but compared with the wise Gotthard Lenz and his brave son Rudlieb I seem to myself like a squire, who has been present at a couple of tournaments, and besides that has at the utmost reached the bounds of his own forests on his hunting parties. They have converted, subdued, gladdened the black men in lands which I know not how to name, and the riches which they brought back with them from thence they consecrate to the public use, just as if one could not do anything else therewith. When they return home from their boldest voyages, they hasten to the hospital they have established, and behave themselves there as overseers, and at the same time as careful, humble attendants. And then they go to the sites of the fair towers and bulwarks, which they cause to be raised for the protection of their country, and then again thither, where they cheerfully and hospitably entreat foreign pilgrims, and after all they sit at table in their own house with their guests, rich and noble as kings, and fresh and free-spoken as shepherds, and many tidings of the adventures they have encountered season the choice food and the costly wine. There among other

things they related to me one, at which my hair stood on end, and perhaps I may find here amongst you nearer tidings, in what manner it really came to pass. It was namely many years since, just about the holy Christmas time, that Gotthard and Rudlieb were dashed by a raging winter storm against the Norwegian shores; the situation of the rock, upon which their vessel was stranded, they are unable to describe accurately; but thus much is certain: not far from thence a mighty knight's castle rose on high, and father and son betook themselves thither to request assistance and refreshment, as is customary and seemly amongst Christian people, while they left their train with the shattered vessel. The castle gate too was opened to them, and they thought all was well. But suddenly the court fills with armed men, all turning their sharp, steel-pointed lances against the helpless strangers, answering their dignified representations and friendly entreaties partly with hollow silence, partly with the hoarse laughter of scorn. At last a knight comes down the steps with eyes all flaming—they know not whether it was a spirit, or a mad heathen—who beckons, and the death-bearing lances close their circle nearer and nearer. Then sound the flute-tones of a gentle female voice, and call on the Saviour, and in mad rage the spectres rattle against one another, and the doors fly open, and Gotthard and Rudlieb save themselves, perceiving as they step forth an angelically beautiful woman through an illumined window. They set thereupon with anxious expedition their leaky ship again afloat, rather entrusting themselves to the sea than to this horrible shore, and landed at last after multifarious dangers in Denmark.—They think the evil castle was a fortress of heathens, but

I hold it to be a ruinous tower deserted by men, where hellish spectres perhaps nightly play their pranks; for tell me, what heathen could be so devilish, as to offer to a shipwrecked claimant of his protection death instead of refreshment and aid?'

Biorn stared fixedly forward, as if turned into stone. But Sintram stepped from the fire to the table, and said: 'Sir father, let us seek out the godless nest, and lay it even with the ground. I know not wherefore, but it comes as quite certain into my mind, that this hellish event is the sole guilty cause of my hideous dreams.'

Biorn raised himself up in wrath against his son, and would perhaps have again uttered a fearful word, but God would not that it should be so; for a pealing trumpet broke in upon this confused discourse, the folding doors were solemnly opened, and a herald walked into the chamber.

He bowed sedately, and then spake: 'I am sent by the old Earl Eirik. Two nights since he returned home from his voyage in the Grecian sea. He thought of taking vengeance on the island, which is called Chios, because exactly fifty years ago his father was slain there by the imperial soldiers. Now your cousin, the sea-king Arinbiorn, was just then lying at anchor in the bay, and spake of atonement. But Earl Eirik would not hear thereof, and the sea-king Arinbiorn said at last, that he would nevermore suffer the island of Chios to be laid waste, because the lays of a primeval Grecian scald, named Homer, were sung there quite gloriously, and very choice wine moreover was drunken there. From words they came to blows, and so mightily did the sea-king Arinbiorn fight, that Earl Eirik lost two ships, and only with difficulty

escaped upon a single very much injured vessel. The old Eirik hopes sometime to make the race of the sea-king expiate this deed, since Arinbiorn himself is not yet at hand. Wilt thou, Biorn Flame-eye, now give compensation to the earl in cattle and other money and goods, as he requires it? Or wilt thou stand before him in battle seven nights from this day upon Niflung's heath?'

Biorn calmly bowed his head, and repeated friendly: 'Seven nights from this day then upon Niflung's heath.'—Thereupon he held out to the herald a cup embossed with gold full of noble wine, saying: 'Drink out of it, and then place beneath thy cloak and take with thee that whereout thou hast drunken.'

'Greet thine earl also from the Baron of Montfaucon,' added Folko, 'and I too will be present upon Niflung's heath, as the sea-king's family friend, and Biorn Flame-eye's cousin and guest.'

The herald started visibly at the name of Montfaucon, bowed very deeply, then gazed at the baron with reverent attention, and walked forth.

Gabrielle smiled affectionately and free from care upon her knight, well acquainted with his conquering strength, and only asked: 'Where shall I then remain, whilst thou goest forth, Folko?'

'I thought,' replied Biorn, 'you would be content to remain here in my castle, fair lady. As warder and servant, I leave you my son behind.'

Gabrielle mused for an instant, and Sintram, turning back towards the fire, spake lowly and darkly to the flame that was just fiercely blazing up again: 'Aye, aye, thus will it probably come to pass. It is to me, as if the Duke Menelaus was also just then away from castle Sparta, out upon a war cruise, when the glowing

Sir Paris found the ravishing mistress at eve in the garden.'

But Gabrielle shuddering, without knowing whereat, said on a sudden: 'Without thee, Folko? And shall I then be deprived of the joy of seeing thee fight? And of the honour of nursing thee, in case a wound strikes thee?'

Folko bowed gracefully thanking his mistress, and returned: 'Go forth with thy knight, if thou desirest it so, thou, his beautiful, inspiring star. It is a good old custom of the north country for women to be present at the combats of their heroes, and no true Norman will approach to disturb the spot, wherefrom they sink down the lights of their eyes.—Or,' asked he looking over at Biorn, 'is Earl Eirik perchance unworthy of his ancestors?'

'A man of honour!' vouched Biorn.

'Then deck thyself, then deck thyself, my beauteous love!' said Folko, half singing and half speaking, 'and go forth with us as a glorious queen of the battle.'

'Forth! Forth with us unto the battle!' sang the joyfully inspired Sintram; and all separated cheerfully and in hope, the others going to rest, Sintram into the forest.

CHAPTER IX

NIFLUNG's heath was a desolate, awful spot in Norway. It was said that the young Niflung, Hogne's son, the last of his race, had there darkly ended a melancholy, unprosperous life. Many of the ancestral grave-stones stood round about, and on the single oaks, which here and there rustled over the plain, were the eyries of high and mighty eagles, which fought at times fiercely

with one another, so that the heavy stroke of their wings and their angry scream could be distinguished afar off over more inhabited countries, and the children in the cradles at times shuddered thereat, and the old people, who had fallen asleep by their hearths, started up terrified.

The seventh night, the last before the day of battle, was just breaking, when from the hills on both sides two warlike arrays came solemnly down: from the side of the evening Eirik the old, from the side of the morning Biorn Flame-eye; for custom required, that one should appear on the battle-field earlier than the appointed hour, to indicate by so doing, that the combat was not dreaded, but sought.

Folko immediately let his satin tent of heavenly blue, decorated with golden fringe, which he bore with him for the accommodation of his gentle housewife, be struck in the most convenient spot of the heath; while Sintram, in herald's guise, rode over to the old Earl Eirik, to announce to him, that the wondrously beautiful Gabrielle of Montfaucon was also journeying in Sir Biorn's army, and would on the morrow behold the battle as queen of the field. Then Earl Eirik bowed deeply at these pleasing tidings, and commanded his scalds to begin a song, which sounded after the following guise:

Freeborn warriors of Eirik,
Fetch forth your brightest ornaments,
Gird on your gayest arms for to-morrow's game!
Lo, the fairest of ladies
Loveliest judgement will exercise,
Gazing upon your feats in the flaming fray.
Over the waves of the ocean,
Over meadow and forest,

Fame brought tidings to us of the baron bold.
He hies armed to attack us
High mid the ranks of our foemen.
Folko comes! fight fiercely, ye Eirik's men!

The strange sounds floated over the heath into Gabrielle's tent. She had been accustomed to see the renown of her knight glorified on all sides, but as his fame swelled up thus brilliantly out of the mouth of enemies towards the nightly heaven, she had almost fallen upon her knees before the great baron. But the courteous Folko held her upright with graceful demeanour, and pressed a glowing kiss upon her hand soft as the down of swans, saying: 'Unto thee, O lovely mistress, belong my deeds, and not unto me!'

Now when the night had passed away over them, and the East was burning, how it flamed and rolled and sounded there on Niflung's heath! Heroes donned their clattering harnesses, noble steeds neighed, the morning draught went about in shining cups of silver and gold, battle-songs and harp-tones murmured around. A jovial march arose on Biorn's side from hunting- and war-horns. Montfaucon, with his squires and troopers in blue steel armour round about him, conducted his mistress up a hill, where she was secure from the flying spears, and could freely overlook the field of battle. The morning lights played round her celebrating her beauty, and as she passed close before Earl Eirik's camp, his men lowered their arms, the leaders deeply bowed their giant helmet-plumes. Two of Montfaucon's pages remained above in Gabrielle's service, restraining their love of fighting not unwillingly for so gentle an office. Then both armies marched by greeting her and singing, took their places ready for battle, and the combat began.

Merrily flew the Norwegian spears from the mighty arms, dashed thunderingly back from the shields swung up to oppose them, at times also met one another clattering in their flight: now and then a warrior in Biorn's or Eirik's array fell silent in his blood.

Then broke forth Sir Folko of Montfaucon with his squadron of Norman horsemen. Again, while flying by, he sent a greeting up to Gabrielle with his lightening sword, and then rushed with a many-voiced, shouting war-cry into the left wing of the foe. Eirik's infantry, pressing upon their knees, stretched forth their stiff halberds firm as iron against him; many a noble horse reared deadly wounded, and falling backwards threw himself and his rider together upon the ground; many another tore down his foe beneath him at the same time in his death's fall; Folko flew through the midst, unwounded he and his battle-steed, a multitude of chosen horsemen after him. Already confusion raged through the hostile army, already Biorn Flame-eye's bands advanced shouting victory, when a troop of horsemen under Earl Eirik threw themselves athwart the great baron, and whilst his Normans, collecting rapidly, drove after him into the new line of foes, the enemy's infantry rolled itself up closer and closer together into a tight thick knot. One heard, that this was done in consequence of the strangely yelling cry of a warrior in the middle. And scarcely had this singular order of battle been formed, when it flew asunder again shouting fearfully in every direction, but with a bursting force, as Hecla drives its flames out of its fathomless gulf. Biorn's warriors, who thought of surrounding the foe, tottered and fell and fled before this

inconceivable fury. In vain did Sir Biorn place himself against the stream; he himself was already nearly torn along in the universal flight.

Mute and motionless Sintram gazed upon the tumult. Friend and foe passed along before him, and each avoided him, and no one would have anything to do with him, so fearful, yea spectre-like, was he to behold in his silent rage. He too struck neither to the right, nor to the left; the battle-axe rested in his hand. But his eyes flamed mightily, and seemed to bore through the enemy's ranks, as if he must discover him who had lit up this warlike frenzy. Herein he succeeded. A little, strangely harnessed man, with large golden horns upon his helmet, and a visor stretching far forward, was leaning upon a two-edged halberd, which at the end was formed like a sickle, and looked as if scornfully laughing to and fro at the victorious chase of Eirik's warriors, and the flight of the foes.—'That is he!' cried Sintram. 'That is he who would make us runaways before Gabrielle's eyes!'—And swift as an arrow he rushed with a wild shout against him.

The combat arose fiercely, but lasted only a short time. In spite of the bold skill of his foe, Sintram, availing himself of his far superior size, smote a crushing blow down upon the horned helmet, which was immediately followed by a gushing stream of blood, whilst the wounded man sank down groaning, and, after a few hideous convulsions, stretched out his limbs stiffened by death.

His fall seemed the condition of the fall of Eirik's host. Even they, who had not seen him perish, lost on a sudden their courage and their joy in fighting, retreated with uncertain footsteps, or ran full of wild

despair upon the halberds of their foes. At the same time also had Montfaucon, after a furious resistance, scattered Earl Eirik's troop of horse, cast the earl himself out of his saddle, and taken him with his own hand. Biorn Flame-eye stood victorious in the middle of the field. The day was decided.

CHAPTER X

CONDUCTED by the great baron, Sintram walked, in the sight of both armies, with glowing cheeks and eyes humbly cast down, up the hill, where Gabrielle stood in all her glittering beauty. Both the warriors sank before her upon their knees, and Folko said solemnly: 'Lady, this youthful warrior of noble race has deserved the prize of this day's victory. I pray you, will you bestow it upon him with your beautiful hand?'

Gabrielle bowed friendly, loosened her blue-and-gold satin scarf, and knotted thereto a sparkling sword, which a page bore upon a cushion of silver tissue. Then she stretched forth the glorious gift smiling towards Sintram, who already bent to receive it; but Gabrielle suddenly stopped, turned to Folko, and said: 'Noble banneret, shall not he, whom I adorn with sword and scarf, rather be a knight?'

Light as a feather Folko sprang up, bowed deeply before his mistress, and with solemn dignity bestowed upon the youth the stroke of knighthood. Then Gabrielle hung the sword around him, saying: 'For God and the honour of pure women, my young hero. I saw you fight, I saw you conquer, and my fervent prayer flew towards you. Fight and conquer yet often, as to-day, that the rays of your renown may lighten over into my distant country.'

And on Folko's beseeching sign she offered to the new knight her tender lips for a kiss.

Glowing through and through, but as it were hallowed, the deeply silent Sintram arose, and hot tears streamed over his softened countenance, whilst the acclaim and the war-horns of all the bands greeted the glorified youth with deafening shouts.

But the old Rolf stood quietly by his side, gazed upon his nursling's piously gleaming eyes, and prayed stilly and joyfully:

All feuds henceforward cease,
Before this heavenly peace!
The Evil One is slain.

Biorn and Earl Eirik had meantime discoursed together in a very lively, but not unfriendly manner. The conqueror now led the conquered up the hill, and presented him to the baron and to Gabrielle, saying: 'We are now become two allies out of two enemies, and I pray you, my dear guests and relatives, that you also would receive him with friendly graciousness, as one, who henceforth belongs to us.'

'Do it, do it!' added Eirik smiling. 'I have indeed tried vengeance, but beaten by sea and by land, one must grow satisfied at last. And God be praised! dishonourably I have not been vanquished neither by the sea-king on the Grecian waters, nor upon Niflung's heath by you.' To this Sir Folko of Montfaucon assented with a friendly hand-shake, and the atonement was celebrated in the heartiest and most solemn manner. Earl Eirik spake during this to Gabrielle in such nobly courteous words, that she looked upon the icy-grey, giantly-large hero with a friendly smile of astonishment, and held forth to him her wondrously beautiful hand for a kiss.

Sintram meanwhile was conversing earnestly with his pious Rolf, and he was heard to say at last: 'Above all the rest, however, bury me that wonderfully brave foe, whom my battle-axe slew. Seek out the fairest hillock for his resting-couch, the noblest oak for his roof. But loosen his visor beforehand, and look carefully in his face, lest one mortally wounded should perchance be cast into his grave alive; and moreover, that thou mayest report to me, what manner of aspect he bore, to whom I am indebted for this most glorious of all prizes of victory.'

Rolf bowed friendly, and went.

'Our young hero is asking there,' said Folko, turning to Earl Eirik, 'after a slain soldier, of whom I should gladly hear nearer tidings. Who, my dear sir, was that wonderful captain, who led your footmen so masterly, and but scarcely fell before Sintram's mighty battle-axe?'

'You ask me more than I really know myself:' returned Earl Eirik. 'Only three nights have passed since the stranger first arrived at my castle. I was sitting at evening with my brethren in arms and vassals by the hearth; we were forging weapons. and singing thereto. All of a sudden so mighty a sound dashed through the noise of the hammer and the song, that we became quite silent, and remained sitting as if turned to stone. It was not long, before there was another similar roar, and we perceived that it must be the sound of an enormous horn, which some person or other was blowing before the fortress, requiring admittance. Upon this I went myself down to the castle gate, and as I paced over the court, all my dogs were terrified by the strange noise, so that, instead of barking, they whined, and crept back into

their kennels. I rebuked them, and called to them, but even the boldest would not go with me.—'Then I will show you,' thought I, 'how one should bear oneself,' grasped my sword-hilt firmly, thrust the torch close beside me into the ground, and without more ado let the wings of the gate flap back. For easily, I well knew, no one should enter against my will.

'A loud laughter burst against me from without, with the words: "Hey-day! what mighty preparations there are here, in order to show to a single little man the hospitality he requires.' And in truth it passed over me, like a blush of shame, when I saw the little stranger standing over against me so entirely alone. I immediately invited him in, and offered him my hand; but he seemed yet too much out of humour, and would nowise give me his. As, however, we were going up, he became friendlier, and showed me too the golden horn, whereon he had blown; he had yet a second of the same kind, and wore them both screwed on to his helmet.

'Above in the hall he deported himself quite strangely. One moment he was merry, the next sullen, now civil, now scoffing, without anybody's being able to perceive wherefore he changed thus with every instant. I would have gladly known whence it proceeded, but how could I question my guest thereafter? Thus much, however, he of himself gave us to understand: that he felt excessively cold in our countries, and that it was much warmer at his home. He was very well instructed too concerning the imperial city Constantinople, and related fearful histories, how in the same brother and brother, uncle and nephew, yea even father and son, thrust one another from the throne, blind, maim, murder one another. Finally,

too, he mentioned his name, and it sounded like Greek and as of a person of distinction, but none of us could retain it.

'Soon, however, he showed himself to be one of the best armourers. Easily and boldly did he understand to grasp and to shape the red-hot iron, and that into the most murderous weapons of which I have ever heard. But this I forbade him, because I was purposed to march into the battle against you only with equal arms, and such as our north country has seen of yore. Then he laughed, and said, even without this one might conquer, by means of skilful evolutions and the like; that I should only give him my footmen to lead, and that then the victory was sure. Hereat I thought verily: 'A good arm-forger is a good arm-wielder.' But I wished to see proofs from him. Ye Sirs, then did he engage in prize-fights, such as one cannot at all imagine; and although the young Sintram be famed far and wide, as a strong and skilful hero, yet I can scarcely conceive how he has been able to slay a warrior like unto my Greek ally.'

He would have spoken still further, but the pious Rolf came hastily back, with some squires, and looked, as also his followers, so ghostly pale, that the eyes of all were involuntarily directed upon him, and upon the tidings which he had to bear. He stood in silence and trembled.

'Take courage, my old friend!' said Sintram. 'Whatever thou mayest relate to us, out of thy faithful mouth it is truth and light.'

'Sir Knight,' thus the old man began his discourse, 'forgive me, but the strange warrior, whom you slew, we could in nowise bury. Or had we only never undone his visor, his far-projecting hateful visor! For

such a hideous face grinned forth from beneath it, so quite hellishly distorted by death, that we have only with difficulty remained masters of our senses. God forbid that we should ever lay hand upon him! Rather send me to dead bears and wolves in the desert, and let me look on them as the eagles and vultures and falcons banquet thereon.'

All shuddered together, and remained awhile silent. At length Sintram took courage, and said: 'Old man, dear old man, whence are these wild words, from the like of which thou hast ever, until this day, been altogether abhorrent and a stranger?—And you, Sir Eirik, did your Greek ally during his life appear so very horrible to you also?'

'I know not at all;' returned Earl Eirik, and looked inquiringly round the circle of his brethren in arms and vassals. These confirmed his words; and at last it became manifest, that neither lord, nor knight, nor yeoman knew accurately to say how the stranger had in truth looked.

'Then we will discover it now, and at the same time bury the corpse;' said Sintram, and invited the whole assembly with a friendly nod to follow him. All did so except the Baron, whom Gabrielle's timid whisper detained beside his gentle wife.

He lost nothing by this delay. For although they wandered over Niflung's heath ten and twenty times, seeking on every side, the corpse of the strange warrior was no more to be found.

CHAPTER XI

The joyful quietness which had upon this day come over Sintram seemed to be more than a passing look

of sunshine. Even if at times a recollection of Sir Paris and Helen would make the wishes of his heart flame up more boldly and wildlier, yet he needed only a glance at the scarf and sword, and the stream of his inner life forthwith glided along, clear as a mirror, and cheerful. 'What can a man desire yet further, than has already been vouchsafed unto me?' said he then often to himself in still transport.

It continued thus for a long time. The beautiful northern autumn already began to redden the leaves of the oaks and elms round about the castle, when he was sitting one day with Folko and Gabrielle beneath the garden trees, almost in the self-same spot where he had afore met the strange creature which he, without himself knowing wherefore, named Little Master. But to-day all was far different from then. Still and radiant the sun was bending towards the sea, and evening airs and single foreboders of the autumnal vapours were rising around from meadow and field up towards the castle hill. Then Gabrielle placing her guitar in Sintram's hands, said: 'Dear friend, thus mild and soft as you now always are, I may safely entrust you with my gentle darling. Let me hear thereto your song about the beautiful blossoms. It seems to me, as if it must sound much more pleasingly in this way, than when you sang it amidst the clamour of your fearful harp.'

The young knight bowed friendly, and did as the lady commanded.

Softly, with a gentleness at other times quite unwonted in him, sounded the notes from his lips, and the wild song seemed to transform itself, and to blossom up into a garden of the blessed. Gabrielle's eyes became moist, and the inspired Sintram, singing

evermore lovelily in his cheerful fervour, gazed upon the pearly heavens. As now the last notes were fading away, Gabrielle's voice like an angel echo repeated:

O thou land with the beautiful blossoms!

Sintram let the guitar sink, and sighed thankfully up towards the starry lights which were just then wandering upwards.

Then Gabrielle bent towards the great Baron, whispering: 'Long, Oh, how long already have we now been far away from our shining castles, from our flowery fields! "O the land with the beautiful blossoms!" '

Sintram scarcely knew whether he heard aright, so utterly did he feel himself banished at once forth from his paradise. And even his last hope disappeared before the courteous assurances of Folko, that he would hasten to fulfil the wish of his mistress in the very next week; the ship was already lying ready to sail on the shore. She thanked him with a kiss gently breathed upon his forehead, and wandered leaning on her hero's arm, singing and smiling, up towards the castle. The gloomy-thoughted Sintram, almost transformed into stone, remained forgotten behind.

Furiously at length he tore himself up, when the night already stood in the heavens, ran full of all his former fierceness up and down among the garden trees, and dashed at last out amongst the wild, moon-illumined mountains.

There he let his sword ring against bush and tree, so that everything round about began to crack and to fall, and the night-birds screaming and whistling flew in wild horror about him, and stag and roe with flighty leaps ran down into the deeper, more quiet wilderness.

Suddenly the old Rolf stood before him, returning home from a journey unto the chaplain at Drontheim, to whom with tears of joy he had related how Sintram was soothed, yea almost healed by Gabrielle's angel presence, and how it might be hoped that the wicked dream had passed away. Now had the raging youth's round-whirling sword almost wounded the good old man unawares. The latter remained standing with folded hands, and sighed up from the bottom of his heart: 'Oh, Sintram, thou my foster-child, thou my heart's leaf, what has come over thee, that thou ragest thus cruelly?'

The youth stood awhile as if charmed, gazed upon his grey friend gloomily and thoughtfully, and his eyes resembled expiring watchfires, that glimmer through deep cloudy vapours. At length he sighed softly, and scarce audibly:

'Thou pious Rolf, thou pious Rolf, leave me to myself! I am not at home in thy heavenly gardens, and even if at any time a friendly breath of air blow open the golden gates, so that I may look in upon the flowery meadow-land, where the dear angels dwell—immediately a cold north wind rushes icily between, and the clattering doors fly to, and alone I stand without in the endless winter.'

'Knight, dear young knight, do but listen to me, Oh do but listen to the good angel in yourself! Do you not bear the self-same sword in your hand, wherewith the pure lady girded you round? Does not her scarf heave upon your throbbing breast? Do you not remember, you were wont to say, that no man could desire more than had fallen to your lot?'

'Yes, Rolf, that I have said:' returned Sintram, and sank weeping bitterly upon the autumnal moss.

The old man's tears also ran down upon his white beard.

After a while the youth raised himself up again, his tears stopped, he looked fearful, cold, and fierce, and said: 'See, Rolf, I have lived through quiet, blessed days, and I thought that everything terrible within me had been dead and gone. Perhaps too it might have continued so, as in truth it would also continue always day, if the sun were but always standing in the heavens. But ask this poor, darkened earth, wherefore she looks thus gloomily! Advise her, that she should smile, as she did before! Old man, she can no more smile, and now the silent, pitiful moon, with her pious shroud-like veil, is gone behind the clouds, and she can no more weep also, and in the black hour every horror and every madness awakens, and thou disturb me not, I tell thee, disturb me not! Huzza! Away after the pale moon!'

His voice at the last words became almost a roar. Stormily he tore himself away from the trembling old man, and flew through the forest from thence.

Rolf knelt down and wept, and prayed silently.

CHAPTER XII

WHERE the sea-coast rises highest and most headlong, beneath three half-decayed oaks—human sacrifices are said to have been offered there in the heathen time—stood Sintram, leaning upon his drawn sword, alone and exhausted, beneath the night now again lightened by the moon, and looked out upon the distant wanderings of the waves, and stiffened deadly pale, like a fearful magical image, shone upon here and there by the pale rays which trembled through the branches of the trees.

Then some one raised himself up on his left side, with half the trunk of his body out of the high yellowed grass, and howled and snorted lowly, and laid himself down again.

But the following strange discourse arose between the two nightly companions:

'Thou there, who movest thyself so fearfully in the grass, belongest thou to the living or to the dead?'

'As one chooses to take it. To heaven and joy I am dead; to hell and sorrow I live.'

'It seems to me as if I had already heard thee afore.'

'O yes.'

'Art thou perchance a restless spirit, and was thy bodily blood shed upon the ground here of yore at the sacrifices to the idols?'

'A restless spirit I am; my blood no one has shed, and no one can shed. But down they have cast me—Hu! down a fathomless precipice.'

'And there thou brakest thy neck?'

'I live, and shall live longer than thou.'

'Thou almost seemest unto me like the mad pilgrim with the dead men's bones.'

'He am I not, although we hold much company together, yea oftentimes a most close friendly intercourse. But, between us two, I also look upon him as mad. When I at times whet him on, and say: Take! then he bethinks himself, and points up towards the stars. And when I again say at any time: Take not! then he mostly seizes hold quite provokingly, and is able to mar my best pleasure and delight. But we still somehow continue to be in some sort brethren in arms, and kinsmen to one another.'

'Give me thy hand that I may help thee up.'

'O ho! my ready, serviceable younker, that might

betide thee most wickedly. But in good sooth you still do in a manner help me up. Take care a moment!'

Wilder and ever wilder was the motion on the ground; thick clouds hurried at the same time over moon and over star, onward, onward on their long, unknown, wild pilgrimage; and Sintram's thoughts drove round and round in a no less singular dance; while grass and tree were rustling both nigh and far uncontrollably, but in heavy alarm. At length the fearful being had raised himself upright. The moon as if timidly curious cast its gleams through a cleft in the clouds upon Sintram's companion, and made it visible to the shuddering youth, that the Little Master was standing close beside him.

'Take thyself away!' cried he. 'I will hear nothing further of thy wicked histories about Sir Paris. They would drive me at last utterly mad.'

'There is no need of the histories of Sir Paris to do that:' laughed the Little Master. 'Enough that the Helen of thy heart journeys for Montfaucon. Trust me, then madness has hold of thee already, by the hair, and by the flesh. Or wouldest thou, that she should yet remain? Then must thou be civiller towards me, than thou art just now.'

At this the Little Master's voice pealed raging mightily over the sea, so that Sintram quite started back from the dwarf. But he instantly rebuked himself therefore, supported himself upon his sword-hilt, grasping it convulsively fast with both hands, and said laughing scornfully:

'Thou and Gabrielle! what acquaintance hast thou then with Gabrielle?'

'Not much;' the answer returned. And the Little Master tottered visibly at the same time in angry

terror to and fro, and said at last: 'The name of thy Helen I cannot altogether well brook, and do not thou name it to me ten times in a breath. But if the storms were now to arise from their lair? If the waves were now to swell up and to roll, a boisterous foaming ring, round the shores of Norway? The journey to Montfaucon must then be no more thought of, and thy Helen would remain here at least throughout the whole long, long, dark winter!'

'If! If!' retorted Sintram disdainfully. 'Is the sea then thy slave? Are the storms thy fellows?'

'Rebels are they to me! Accursed rebels!' muttered the Little Master into his red beard. 'Thou must help me thereto, Sir Sintram, if I am to command them. But for that again thou hast no heart.'

'Braggart! Miserable braggart!' exclaimed Sintram. 'What requirest thou of me?'

'Not much, Sir Knight; for one who has strength and fire in his soul, by no means much. Thou shalt only for half an hour long gaze thus right fixedly and sharply out upon the sea, and cease not from willing, and still ever willing, with all thy might, that it should foam, that it should toss, that it should rage, and never quiet itself, until the stark winter stands over your mountains. Then he will of himself sufficiently stop the Duke Menelaus from sailing forth for Montfaucon. And give me too a lock of thy black hair. It flies already as madly about thee as the wings of ravens and vultures do.'

The youth drew his sharp dagger, cut in utter bewilderment a lock from his head, threw it to the stranger, and stared now, according to his desire, willing mightily out upon the sea-floods.

And softly, quite softly, began the moving upon the

waters, as when some one breathes grievously terrified by his dreams, and would gladly rest, and yet cannot. Sintram was on the point of leaving off; but a ship with swelling white sails was floating in the moonshine towards the South. The dread of seeing Gabrielle too soon in like manner sailing forth came over him; willing ever more strongly, he pierced the moist abyss with his stark looks.—Sintram, one might have cried, ah Sintram, art thou then really the same, who but now wert looking into the moist heavens of thy mistress's eyes?

And the waves swelled up more mightily, and the storm drew along over them whistling and whining; already were the frothy heads of the billows visible in the moonlight.

Then the Little Master threw the lock of the youth's hair up towards the clouds, and as it flitted and tottered and hovered in the whirlpools of the air, the storm-wind raised itself up so angrily, that sea and sky were clouded over and rushed together, and that one heard from afar the yell of agony from many thousand sinking seafarers.

But the mad pilgrim with the dead men's bones passed along by the shore upon the surge, giantly high, tottering terribly; one saw not the vessel on which he stood, so mightily did the billows rear round about him.

'Him thou must save, Little Master, him thou must save, by all means!' thus sounded Sintram's angrily beseeching voice through the noise of the waves and the winds. But the Little Master returned laughing: 'Concern not thyself about him; he will easily save himself. Him the floods harm not. Seest thou? They only beg of him, and therefore leap up so high upon

him. And he gives them rich alms, very rich alms, that I can assure thee.'

And in truth it was as if the pilgrim strewed some dead men's bones upon the surge, and then passed unassailed onwards.

Then Sintram felt a horrible shudder tremble through his blood, and rushed with wild speed away towards the castle. His companion had as it were flown, and was scattered away.

CHAPTER XIII

In the fortress Biorn and Gabrielle and Folko of Montfaucon were sitting about the round stone table, from which, since the arrival of the noble guests, the harnesses, formerly the castle lord's dumb companions, had been moved away, in order to be laid together in a heap in the neighbouring chamber.

To-day, while the storm was rattling so uncontrollably against the windows and doors, it was as if the old harnesses also were moving in the next apartment, and Gabrielle started up several times terrified thereby, and fastened her fair eyes fixedly upon the little iron door, dreading that some breastplated spectre would now every instant walk forth from thence, bending forwards with his mighty helmet through the lowly doorway.

Sir Biorn smiled wildly at this, and said, as if he had guessed her thoughts: 'O, he now no longer comes out from thence, I have at length driven him away.'

His guests stared doubtingly at him, and he began then with fearful indifference—it was as if the storm had awakened all the fierceness of his heart—the following narrative:

'I too was once a happy man, could smile, like you, and could quietly rejoice in the morrow, like you. That was in those days, when the hypocritical chaplain had not yet confounded the clear-sighted spirit of my beautiful housewife with his superstitions, on account of which she at last went into the convent, and left me alone with our wild child. That was not quite handsome in the handsome Verena!—Now look ye, in her blooming, cheerful youth, before I yet knew her, many knights were her suitors, amongst others Sir Weigand the Slim, and it was towards him that the lovely virgin seemed to incline above all the others with a gentle satisfaction. Her parents well knew that Weigand stood almost on a level with them in power and nobility; his incipient fame in arms too was soaring upwards gloriously and free from reproach, so that Verena and he were already almost regarded as bride and bridegroom.

'Now it came to pass one day, that they were both taking a walk amongst the garden trees, whilst without a shepherd was at the same time driving his sheep up the mountains. The damsel sees amongst them a little lamb, snow-white, and skipping about most merrily and delightfully, so that she conceives a wish for it. Immediately Weigand flying over the fence hastens after the shepherd, and offers him two golden arm-clasps for the little creature. But the shepherd will not part with it, scarcely listens to the knight, and plods along quietly on his way up the hill, Weigand walking close beside him. At length the patience of the latter bursts. He threatens, and the shepherd, strong and proud, like all his fellows in our north country, threatens in return. Suddenly Weigand's sword-stroke dashes upon his head. It was meant

indeed that it should only fall flat; but who can rein in a choleric steed and a drawn sword? The bleeding shepherd, with his head split open, tumbles down the precipice; his flock bleat anxiously upon the mountains. But the lamb runs in its alarm towards the garden, presses itself through between the pales, and lies, as if beseeching help, sprinkled red with the blood of its master, at Verena's feet. She took it into her arms, and suffered not from that hour forth Weigand the Slim any more to come into her presence.

'Thenceforward she evermore nursed the little lamb, and had no joy beside in anything whatsoever in the world, and was pale and turned towards heaven, as lilies are. She is said even at that time to have wished to enter a convent, but I came marching to her father's assistance in a bloody feud, and brought him out safe from the midst of his foes. This the old man placed before her, and gently smiling she gave me her wondrously beautiful hand.

'Then the feeling of his sorrow no longer suffered the poor Weigand to remain in the country. It drove him forth as a pilgrim into the world of Asia, whence our forefathers came hither, and he is said to have achieved therein wonderful deeds in bravery and in humbleness. In truth my heart softened strangely, whensoever I heard speak of him in those days.

'After many years he returned back again, and wished to erect a church and a cloister, there upon the western mountains, from whence the walls of my castle are distinctly seen to lighten. They say, he had an intention to let himself be consecrated as a priest therein, but it turned out otherwise.

'For some vessels of pirates had sailed up out of the Southern seas, and their captain hearing of the build-

ing of the cloister trusted to find much gold with the castle lord and the masters of the work, or at least, in case he fell upon them and dragged them away, to squeeze out from them a huge ransom. He must truly have known but little of Northern courage and Northern arms, but he soon attained to such a knowledge.

'Landing in that bay near the black rock, he crept through by-ways up to the building-place, surrounded it, and thought the business was now finished. Hey, but how did Weigand and his fellow builders fall upon them with swords and hammers and axes! The heathens ran flying towards their ships, Weigand taking vengeance at their heels.

'In this manner he passed along by our castle, and just, as he beheld Verena upon the terrace, and she, for the first time after many years, kindly greeted the ardent victor, a heathen dagger hurled backwards in their dismay, flew against his unhelmed head, and bleeding and senseless he sank upon the ground.

'We drove away the heathens utterly. Then I let the wounded knight be borne into the castle, and my pale Verena glowed, as lilies do in the morning light, and Weigand smiling at her neighbourhood opened his eyes. He would go into no other chamber, than the little one here adjoining, where the harnesses now lie; "That seemed to him," he said, "like the little cell, which he soon hoped to inhabit doing penance in his quiet cloister."—Everything was done according to his wish; my beautiful Verena nursed him, and he seemed at first in the straight path to amendment; but his head continued weak and confused on the slightest occasion, his motion was a falling rather than a walking, his hue was pale as death. We could not allow

him to leave us. So he used to come in those days out of the little door there, when we were sitting together on an evening, tottering constantly into the hall; and I oftentimes felt woe and anger in my heart, when the lovely eyes of Verena gleamed so mildly and sweetly upon him, and a blush like the evening light flew over her lily cheeks. But I bore it, I should have borne it until the end of us all.—Woe, then Verena went into a convent!'

He dropped down upon his folded hands, so that the stone table seemed to groan thereat, and remained awhile motionless as one that is dead. When he again raised himself up, he flashed fearfully angry looks along through the hall, and said at length to Folko:

'Thy beloved Hamburghers, Master Gotthard Lenz, and Master Rudlieb, his son; they also are in fault herein. Ha! who desired them to be stranded here, so nigh unto my castle?'

Folko darted a piercing look at him, and was on the point of letting a terrible question go forth, but another look on the trembling Gabrielle enjoined him to be silent, at least for the present, and Sir Biorn proceeded in his relation after the following wise:

'Verena was with her nuns, I was alone, and my grief had driven me the whole day long wildly round about through forest and wood-stream and mountain. Then I come back in the dusk to my deserted castle, and scarcely have I entered the hall here, when the little door creaks, and Weigand creeps towards me—he had slept through the whole—and asks: "Where is Verena tarrying?"—At this I become as it were mad, and grin and howl to him: "she is become mad, and I too, and thou too, and we are now all mad!"—Holy God! then the wound in his head burst open, and dark floods

streamed over his face—Oh, what a different red from that when Verena came to meet him at the castle gate—and he raved, and ran out into the wilderness, and roams about there ever since, as a distracted pilgrim.'

He was silent, and Gabrielle was silent, and Folko was silent, all three cold and pale, like the images of the dead. At length the fearful narrator added in a low and quite exhausted voice: 'He has since that time visited me here once again, but he no longer comes now through the little door. Look ye, have I not procured myself quiet and order within my castle?'

CHAPTER XIV

SINTRAM was not yet returned home, when stunned with dismay they betook themselves to rest. Nobody too thought of him, so powerfully did every heart struggle with strange forebodings and uncertain cares. Even the hero-breast of Sir Folko of Montfaucon fluttered in inward war.

But the old Rolf was still sitting without in the forest weeping, presented his white head regardlessly to the storm, and waited for his young master. He, however, was travelling along entirely different ways, and it was not until morning was clearly risen, that on the opposite side he entered the castle.

Gabrielle had slumbered sweetly through the night. It was as if angels with golden wings blew away from her the wild histories of the preceding evening, and breathed upon her in their stead the bright flowery forms and watery mirrors, and the green hilly labyrinths of her home. She smiled lovelily and breathed

stilly, while without the magical storm flew howling over the woods and waged battle with the agonized sea.

But, indeed, when she awoke on the next morning, and the windows were still ever ringing, the clouds still ever, as if dissolved into smoke and vapour, concealed the heavens, she could have wept from anxiety and heaviness, especially as Folko had already gone forth out of her apartments, and that, as her women during her dressing related to her, in full armour of battle. At the same time she heard in the sounding halls without, the tread of heavy-armed men, and learnt on inquiry that the Knight of Montfaucon had summoned his whole train of warriors to be ready for the protection of their mistress.

Covered round with her swelling ermine furs, she seemed to the eye in her fear almost like a tender flower, blossoming up out of the snow, trembling before the winter storms. Then Sir Folko of Montfaucon came into the room, in all the glittering splendour of his armour, his golden helmet with its high-floating plume peacefully placed beneath his arm, and greeted her with cheerful seriousness. His signal dismissed Gabrielle's women; the armed men without were heard to separate quietly.

'Lady,' said he, and led her who was already comforted by his presence to a couch, taking a place beside her, 'lady, will you forgive your knight, if he have left you for some moments to an anxious disquietude? but honour called and strict duty. Now everything is arranged, and that kindly and mildly; forget every alarm, and whatever may have disturbed you, place it among the things which no longer are.'

'But you and Biorn?' asked Gabrielle.

'On my knightly word of honour,' said Folko, 'there all is well.'

He began thereupon to converse upon indifferent and cheerful subjects with his wonted grace and courtesy, but Gabrielle deeply moved leant upon him and said:

'O Folko, O my hero, O thou my life's bloom, my protection and my dearest weal upon earth, let me know all, if thou mayest! Where, however, any given promise binds thee, it is another thing. Thou knowest that I am of the race of Portamour, and would require nothing of my knight that might cast even the suspicion of a breath upon his spotless shield of arms.'

Folko looked earnestly forward for an instant, then with an affectionate smile into his lady's face, saying: 'It is not that, Gabrielle, but wilt thou be able to bear what I shall announce unto thee? Wilt thou not sink down beneath it, like a slender pine beneath the weight of the snow?'

She raised herself somewhat proudly upright, and said: 'I have already before reminded thee of the name of my fathers. Let me now add thereto, that I am the wedded wife of the Baron of Montfaucon.'

'So be it then;' returned Folko, bowing gravely. 'And what must one time come up into the light of the sun, whither according to its dark nature it belongs not, does so least terribly by a sudden lightning flash. Know then, Gabrielle: the wicked knight, who would have slain my friends Gotthard and Rudlieb, is no other than our host and cousin, Biorn Flame-eye.'

Gabrielle started for an instant, and covered her eyes fast over with her fair hands. Then she stared wonderingly around, and said: 'I have heard awrong, although even yesterday such an abodement struck

me. Or said you not before that between you and Biorn all was arranged, and that kindly and mildly? Between the brave Baron and such a man after such a crime?'

'You heard aright;' returned Folko, and gazed with heart-felt satisfaction upon his gentle, knightly proud mistress. 'To-day with the first dawn I went down unto him, and called him forth to battle for life and death in the neighbouring woody vale, in case he were the person whose castle was to have been the hearth of sacrifice unto Gotthard and Rudlieb. He was standing already fully armed, said merely: "I am he;" and walked after me into the forest. When, however, we were alone upon the place of combat, he hurled away his shield from himself down a giddy hanging cliff, then his battle-sword flew the same way, then he burst open his shirt of mail with two giantly powerful rents, and said: "Strike now, my lord judge, for I am a heavy sinner, and fight against you I may not.'—How could I strike him?—Then was there a strange atonement between us. He is half as it were my vassal, and yet again I absolved him solemnly from all guilt in my own name and in that of my friends. He was crushed with agony, but no tear came into his eye and no friendly word out of his mouth. That which presses him down is the strict right, which has invested me with this power, and Biorn is become my undertenant upon his own fief. I know not, Lady, whether you are willing to behold us together upon these terms; if not, I will seek out another castle for our abode; there is surely no one in Norway, which would not receive us with joy and honour, and this wild autumn storm may perhaps put off our voyage yet a long time. This, however, I think: were we to part

now and in such guise it would break the wild man's heart.'

'Where my high lord remains, there I also remain joyfully beneath his protection;' returned Gabrielle, and felt the greatness of her hero shine once more quite rapturously through her heart.

CHAPTER XV

THE noble lady had just disarmed her knight with her own tender hands—only in the field might pages or squires have to do with Montfaucon's armour, according to her command—and she was now hanging about him his heavenly blue satin mantle fringed with gold, when the door opened softly, and Sintram meekly greeting her entered the chamber.

At first Gabrielle nodded to him friendly, as was her custom, but suddenly growing pale she turned from him and said: 'In God's name, Sintram, how are you looking thus? And how has a single night been able thus very terribly to transform you?'

Sintram remained standing quite thunder-stricken, and knew not himself aright what had really befallen him.

Then Folko took him by the hand, led him towards a mirror-like bright shield, and said very seriously: 'Look at yourself a moment, my young knight!'

Sintram started back shocked at the first aspect. It was unto him, as if the Little Master with the one, crooked, upstaring feather of his strange head-dress were looking out at him; but at last it became clear to him, that the image in the mirror was solely and altogether himself, and no one else, and it was merely the wild cut of the dagger amongst his locks, that gave

him such an estranging, and, as he could not deny unto himself, spectre-like appearance.

'Who has done this unto you?' asked Folko, still ever severe and earnest. 'And what terror has driven your tangled and tattered hair thus heavenward?'

Sintram could answer nothing. He felt, as if he were standing before a judgement-seat, and they were on the point of shamefully stripping him of the honour of knighthood.

Suddenly Folko drew him away again from the shield, led him towards the clattering window, and asked: 'Whence cometh this storm?'

Again Sintram was silent. His limbs began to flutter against one another, and Gabrielle whispered, pale and trembling: 'O Folko, my hero, what has happened? O tell me, have we then entered into an enchanted castle?'

'Our Northern home,' returned Folko solemnly, 'is rich in many a secret art. One must not, therefore, forthwith call the people enchanters; but the young man there has reason to be carefully on the watch; whomsoever the Evil One has once grasped by a hair of his head——'

Sintram heard no more. He tottered groaning out of the chamber.

Without the old Rolf met him, still quite stiff from the sleet-storm and howling tempest of the night. Glad only to have his young master again, he left his disturbed appearance unnoticed; but while he attended him to his bed-chamber, he yet said; 'Witches and storm-brewers must have been carrying on their work on the sea-shore. I know, such violent changes in the air come not to pass without devilish arts.'

Sintram had fainted, and only with difficulty did

Rolf restore him so far that he was able to appear in the great hall at the noon-tide hour. But before he descended thither, he let a shield be brought unto him, looked at himself again therein, and cut off, shuddering fearfully, the rest of his long, black head of hair with his dagger, so that to look upon he was almost like a monk, and thus he went down to the others, who were already sitting at table.

All stared wonderingly at him, but the old Biorn started up quite fierce with rage: 'Wilt thou also perchance go into a cloister, like thy beautiful lady mother?'

A commanding wink from the Baron of Montfaucon reined in the rest of this burst, and Biorn, as if to make amends, added with a forced smile: 'I only mean whether it has perchance happened unto him as unto Absalom, and he has been forced to free himself out of his head-snares by the loss of his locks?'

'You must not jest with holy things;' repeated the Baron, now grown severe, and all were silent; and immediately after the table was removed, Folko and Gabrielle walked with a courteously grave greeting up towards their chamber.

CHAPTER XVI

The life at the castle preserved from this day forth an entirely different form. The two lofty and friendly beings, Folko and Gabrielle, were almost always in their apartments, and when they appeared, it was with calm dignity and with silent seriousness, and Biorn and Sintram stood before them in timid humility. Yet the castle lord could not support the thought that his guests should depart unto the hearth

of another knight. When Folko one day spake thereof, something like a tear came into the wild man's eye. He sank his head and said in a low voice: 'As you will. But I think, I shall on the day after fly down the rock.'

In this manner, therefore, they remained together; for storm and sea raged evermore uncontrollably, so that no voyage was to be thought of, and the oldest men could remember no such autumn in Norway. The priests searched through all their books in Runic characters, the scalds looked to their traditions and songs, and discovered nothing like unto it.

Biorn and Sintram defied the bad weather. The few hours, when Folko and Gabrielle appeared, father and son were also in the castle, as if to wait upon them and show them homage; the remaining time of the day, and often throughout whole nights, they rushed through the woods and rocky valleys, and hunted bears.

Folko, meanwhile, summoned everything pleasing in his spirit, every grace of his noble courtesy, to make Gabrielle forget that she was living in this wild castle, and that the stark Norwegian winter was already mounting up to freeze her in here for whole moons. At one time he related blooming tales, at another he played mirthful tunes, and desired Gabrielle to lead off a dance thereto with her women; then again, resigning his lute unto one of the damsels, he himself mingled in the dance, and always knew how to show his devotion unto his mistress therein in an ever novel manner; then he appointed trials of bravery amongst his armed men in the spacious castle halls, and Gabrielle had some pretty trinket or other to offer unto the conqueror; often too he himself engaged in the circle of fighters, but so that he only met their

assaults on the defensive, and deprived no one of the prize. The Norwegians, who stood round as spectators, were wont to compare him to their half-god Baldur in their ancient world of fable, as he let the darts of the other Asae be directed against himself, in play, being conscious of his indwelling invulnerableness and glory.

After such a trial combat one day, the old Rolf stepped up towards him, beckoned him aside with friendly humility, and said softly: 'They call you the beautiful, high and mighty Baldur, and they are right. But even the beautiful, high and mighty Baldur perished. Be on your guard!'

Folko looked wonderingly at him.

'Not', continued the old man, 'that I know of any plot against you, or can even distantly suspect any such. God preserve a Northman from such fear! But as you stand thus very glittering and high and glorious before me, the perishableness of everything earthly rushes overpoweringly into my mind, and I cannot do otherwise than say unto you: Beware, Ah beware, noble Baron! even the fairest glory comes to an end.'

'These are pious good thoughts,' returned Folko friendly, 'and I will lay them up in a heedful heart, my faithful old father.'

Indeed the pious Rolf was oftentimes about Folko and Gabrielle, and held a kind of bond between the two so very different households in the fortress. For how could he have ever deserted his Sintram? Only he was not able any longer to follow him on his hunting expeditions, through the waste, stormy, and rainy weather.

In this manner the bright winter had at last

mounted up in his full majesty. The home voyage to Normandy was now otherwise prevented, and the magical tempests were silent. Brightly shone the white plains and mountains in their hoar-frost holiday attire, and Folko used at times, with skates upon his feet, to wing his mistress swift as the wind along on a light sledge over the crystal, sparkling, hard-frozen lakes and rivers.

On the other hand the bear-hunting of the castle lord and his son took a still bolder, yea almost a jovial course.

About this time—Christmas was already nearing, and Sintram sought to quench the dread of the dreams that awaited him in the wildest pursuits of the chase—about this time, Folko and Gabrielle were standing together upon one of the terraces of the castle. It happened to be just then a mild evening; the snow-covered country shone lovelily in the glowing red gleams of the setting sun; some men in the smithy below were singing to their noble task songs out of the ancestral heathen time. At length, however, the song was silent, the hammer-stroke rested, and without the partakers in it being visible or distinguishable by their voice, the following discourse took place:

'Who is the boldest warrior amongst all those that derive their race from our high mother country?'

'That is Folko of Montfaucon.'

'Well answered; but tell me: is there then nothing whatsoever from the achievement of which even the great Baron turns away?'

'Aye, surely, there is such a thing. And we, who have remained at home here in Norway, we do it quite merrily and with ease.'

'That is?'

'Bear-hunting in winter, down precipices stiff with ice, over endless snowfields away.'

'Truly thou sayest right, companion. Whoso knows not how to fasten our snowshoes to his feet, knows not to turn himself upon them right and left in the twinkling of an eye, he may indeed be otherwise a high and mighty knight, but in our mountains, upon our hunting-parties, there he had better keep away, and remain with his pretty wife in her chamber.'

One heard the speakers laugh together pleased; and how they then set to again to their mighty forgery.

Folko remained some time standing in thought. There sparkled yet something else beside the evening glow upon his cheeks. Gabrielle too in deep silence mused after an unknown something. At last she collected herself, twined her arms round her darling, and said: 'Is it not so, thou goest out bear-hunting tomorrow, and bringest home to thy lady the prize of the chase?'

The knight bowed a joyful assent, and the rest of the evening passed away amidst dancing and music.

CHAPTER XVII

'Look, noble Sir'—said Sintram the next morning upon Folko's desire to go out with him—'our snowshoes, which we call skier, wing our course indeed, so that it goes down hill fleet as the wind, and up hill more rapidly than any one is able to follow us, and upon the plain no horse can catch us, but it is only the experienced master whom they serve to his weal. It is as if the spirit of a cobold were confined in them, fearfully destructive to the stranger that has not learnt to use them from his childhood upwards.'

Folko returned somewhat proudly: 'Is this the first time then of my being among your mountains? I have engaged in this sport already years ago, and, thank God! every knightly exercise easily makes friends with me.'

Sintram ventured not to object further, and still less so the old Biorn. They both, too, felt better satisfied, when they saw with what expertness and security Folko buckled the skier to his feet, without allowing that anybody should assist him therein. Their way went up the mountains after a bloodthirsty bear, already long threatened in vain. Soon they were compelled to separate, and Sintram offered himself to the baron as his fellow-hunter. The latter, moved by the youth's deep humility and devotedness, forgot all that had appeared to him of late as suspicions in his pale confused form, and uttered a very friendly Yes.

As they now climbed up higher and ever higher into the white mountains, and from many a giddy pinnacle overlooked the heights and crags that lay beneath them, like a sea suddenly turned to stone, or rather frozen into ice in the midst of the wildest storm, the strong breast of the noble Montfaucon heaved ever freelier and more merrily. He sang out war-and-love songs into the sharply blue air, songs out of his Frankish native country, and the echo sounded them back again amongst the thickly entangled crags as if in wonder. At the same time he climbed up hill and glided down hill in mirthful sport, used his supporting staff powerfully and securely, and swung himself to the right and again to the left, just as a merry game-someness suggested it to him, so that Sintram changed his former anxiety into wondering astonishment, and the hunters, who still kept the Baron in their eye, burst

forth into loud shouts, announcing further and still further along the whole line the new glory of their guest.

The fortune which almost always attended the noble Folko in his deeds of arms seemed resolved that here also it would not desert him. He and Sintram found after a short search the sure track of the beast of prey, and followed it with joyfully beating hearts and such stormy speed, that even a winged foe would not have been able to escape from their pursuit. But he, whom they were seeking, thought of no flight. Sullenly he lay in the cave of an almost headlong precipice, nigh unto the summit, and was angered by the noise of the chase, and only waited in his sluggish rage until an opponent should venture near enough for him to seize him bloodily. Folko and Sintram were now close to the rock, the others scattered abroad over the manifoldly entangled waste. The track pointed upwards, and the two fellow hunters climbed along upon different sides, in order that their prey might in this manner the less fail them. Folko stood first upon the lonely pinnacle, and gazed around: a far, trackless region of snow extended before him beyond the bounds of sight, at the farthest end floating away into the dusky evening clouds that were already gathering. He began to think that he had departed from the course of the fearful wild beast. Here a roar sounded from the rocky gulf close to him, and black and clumsy the bear raised himself forth out of the snow, and placed himself upright, and walked with sparkling eye towards the Baron. Sintram meanwhile was in battle with the masses of snow that continually glided down, labouring in vain to climb up the height.

Rejoicing in a war long unattempted, and which

had almost become quite new to him, Sir Folko of Montfaucon poised his hunting-spear, and awaited the attack of the monster. He allowed it to approach quite close unto himself, so that it already reached forth at him with its fierce paws; then he gave his thrust, and the iron spear-head entered deep into the bear's breast. But the hideous foe still ever pressed forwards howling and roaring, only the cross-bar of the spear held him off, and the knight was forced to root himself deep into the ground, in order to withstand the fierce onset, with the loathsome face of the beast panting for blood ever close before his eye, the hoarse roar thrust forth half from the agony of death, half from blood-thirstiness, close in his ear.

At length the bear's furious strength became ever weaker, and the black blood streamed richly over the snow. He tottered; a powerful thrust threw him backwards, so that he became dumb and tumbled headlong down the hanging crag. At the same instant Sintram stood beside the Baron of Montfaucon.

Folko taking breath said: 'So, after all, I have not yet gotten the prize of the chase in my hands. And have it I must, as surely as I have succeeded in winning it. Only the snowshoe on my right foot there seems to be damaged. Thinkest thou, Sintram, that it will yet hold for me to slide down the precipice?'

'Let me rather go down;' said Sintram. 'I will fetch you up the bear's head and claws.'

'A true knight,' returned Folko, somewhat angrily, 'performs no knightly work by halves. Whether my snowshoes will hold here, is what I ask thee?'

While Sintram bent down to them and was on the point of saying no, somebody close behind him spake suddenly: 'Aye, surely, Yes! that is easily seen!'—

Folko thought Sintram had spoken, and glided down swift as an arrow, while the latter looked round astonished. The Little Master's detested form fell into his eye.

He was just about to address him fiercely, when he heard the fearful fall of the Baron, and terrified by it remained silent. Below, too, in the abyss did everything remain soundless and still.

'Now, wherefore waitest thou?' said the Little Master after a while. 'He has broken his neck. Go home to the castle, and take the fair Helen unto thyself.'

Sintram shuddered. Then his hideous companion began to extol the charms of Gabrielle in such glowing magical words, that the youth's heart swelled with a longing never hitherto felt. He thought of the fallen man no otherwise than as of a demolished party-wall between himself and heaven; he turned towards the castle.

Then a calling sounded up from the chasm: 'My fellow hunter, help! my fellow hunter, help! I live still, but I am very much wounded.'

Sintram was going down, and already cried out to the Baron: 'I come!'—Then said the Little Master: 'For the shattered Duke Menelaus there is now no more any help, and the fair Helen knows it too already. She is only waiting for Sir Paris to come and comfort her.' And with accursed cunning he wound that tale into Sintram's life, and intermingled with it his flame-breathing praises of the beautiful woman, and alas! the blinded youth yielded to him, and fled!

He still, indeed, heard from afar the Baron's call: 'Sir Sintram! Sir Sintram! Thou, unto whom I gave the holy order, haste thee now, and help! The she-

bear is coming with her young, and my arm is lamed. Sir Sintram! Sir Sintram! haste thee, and help!'

The calling died away before the stormy speed with which the pair rushed along upon their snowshoes, and before the wicked words of the Little Master, which scoffed at the pride wherewith but lately the Duke Menelaus had encountered the poor Sintram. At length he cried out: 'Good luck to thee, my lady bearess! Good luck to you, my young bear-boys! Now ye are holding a precious banquet! Now ye are eating the dread of heathendom, him, on account of whom the Moorish brides weep, the great Baron of Montfaucon! Now wilt thou no more, O thou my delicate lord knight, now wilt thou no more cry out before the troops: "Montjoy, Saint Denys!" '

But scarce had this hallowed name proceeded from the Little Master's mouth, when he instantly raised a dismal howl, twisted himself distortedly to and fro, and at length flew from thence whining and wringing his hands into the midst of the now beginning snow-dust.

Sintram thrust his staff against the earth, and stood still. How did the broad snow-field stare at him, and the mountains stretching over from afar, and the dark black pine-forests—how did they all stare at him so strangely in their stark threatful silence!—He thought that he should sink down beneath the weight of his wretchedness and his guilt. The sound of a distant hermit's bell struck mournfully upon his ear.

He wept aloud through the on-rushing night: 'My mother! my mother! I too had once indeed a dear careful mother, and she said, I was a pious child!'

Then there breathed upon him like a gentle angel's comfort: Montfaucon might perhaps be not yet dead,

and swift as lightning he flew back along the course to the hanging rock.

Arrived at the dreadful spot, he bent down over the crag poring anxiously about. The moon, that was just then mounting up in full splendour, assisted him.

Sir Folko of Montfaucon was leaning, bloody and pale, half kneeling, against the wall of rock; his right arm hung shattered and powerless down; it was plain, that he had been unable to draw his brave sword out of its sheath. And yet he held with his proud hero-looks, with his defying threatful bearing the she-bear and her young afar, so that they only crept round about him angrily growling; ready indeed every instant for a furious attack, but yet every instant shrinking back again from the victor's form that was still so glorious even in its defenselessness.

'O what a hero might have perished here!' sighed Sintram; 'and alas! through whose guilt?'—At the same instant, however, his javelin flew down in well-aimed flight, and the dying she-bear gasped in her blood, and her young flew howling away.

The Baron looked wonderingly upwards. His face lightened as if glorified in the glimmer of the moon, earnest and severe, but friendly, like the appearance of an angel. 'Come down!' he beckoned, and Sintram glided with hasty care down the mountain. He was beginning to employ himself about the wounded Baron, but Folko said: 'First take off the head and claws of the bear, whom I slew. I have promised to my beautiful Gabrielle the prize of the chase. Then come to me and bind up my wounds. My right arm is broken.'

Sintram did according to the Baron's behest. When now the pledges of the victory had been taken, and the

shattered arm set, Folko desired the youth to lead him to the castle.

'Oh God! if I durst only look you in the face!' said Sintram softly; 'or if I only knew at all how to come near unto you!'

'Thou wert truly upon a most evil way,' returned Montfaucon gravely, 'but what do we human beings, even the best of us, avail in the sight of God, did not repentance assist us! After all thou art still he, who has saved my life, and therefore be of good cheer and set off.'

The youth grasped the Baron gently and powerfully beneath the left arm, and both walked along their way through the moonlight in silence.

CHAPTER XVIII

From the castle sounds of grief pealed in their ears, the chapel was solemnly lighted up; Gabrielle was kneeling therein in prayer, bewailing the knight of Montfaucon's death.

But how quickly was everything changed, when the noble Baron now, pale indeed and bloody, but yet delivered from all danger of his life, stood smiling at the entrance of the pious building, and with gentle, soothing voice said: 'Bethink thyself, Gabrielle, and be not alarmed at me, for by the honour of my race: thy knight lives.'

O, how blessedly did Gabrielle's heavenly eyes sparkle towards her hero, and then instantly turn up towards heaven, still ever streaming, but with the blessed waters of thankful joy! With the assistance of two pages Folko sank beside her on his knee, and both solemnized their happiness in silent prayer.

When they walked out of the chapel, the wounded knight being carefully led by his beautiful mistress, Sintram stood without in the dark, gloomy as the night, and shy as its birds. He stepped forward, however, trembling into the light of the torches, laid down the bear's head and claws before Gabrielle's feet, and said: 'These has the great Baron of Montfaucon won for his lady, as the prize of to-day's chase.' —The Norwegians burst forth into wondering shouts of triumph at the stranger hero, who had on his very first hunting expedition slain the noblest and most fearful of all the ravenous monsters among their mountains. At this Folko looked round the circle smiling, and said: 'You must not now any of you hereafter laugh at me, if I from this time forth remain in my chamber with my pretty wife.'—Then those who had spoken on the former evening in the smithy stepped forth, bowed deeply, and replied: 'Sir, who could have known, that there is in the whole world no knightly exercise, in the mastery of which thou excellest not above all other men?'—'Some reliance might have been placed in the pupil of the old Sir Hugh;' returned Folko friendly. 'But now, ye brave Northern heroes, praise my preserver also, who protected me from the paws of the she-bear, when wounded by my fall I was leaning against the rock.'

He pointed at Sintram, and the universal shout of joy was renewed, and the old Rolf sank his head, with tears of joy upon his eyelashes, over his fosterchild's hand.

But Sintram drew back shuddering. 'Did ye know,' said he, 'whom ye have before you, all your spears would fly against my breast, and that too might perhaps be the best thing for me. But I respect the honour of my father and my race, and for this time

make not confession. Only thus much, ye Northern warriors, must ye know——'

'Young man,' said Folko, interrupting him with a reproving look, 'already again thus fierce and confused? I desire, that thou keep silence concerning thy bodiless dreams.'

Sintram did at first according to the Baron's command, but scarce had the latter begun to step forward smiling towards the castle steps, when he said: 'O no, O no, thou noble, wounded hero, hold yet a moment! I will obey thee in all that thy heart desires; herein I cannot obey thee. Yet noble Northern warriors, yes, thus much ye must and shall know: I am no longer worthy to dwell beneath one roof with the great Folko of Montfaucon and with his angelically pure housewife Gabrielle. And you, my old-growing father, good night, and long not for me any further. In the stone castle on the moon-rock am I purposed to dwell, until in some way or other it shall again be otherwise.'

There was something in his speaking, which no one ventured to set himself against, not even Folko. The wild Biorn bowed his head humbly, and said: 'Only do exactly according to your pleasure, my poor son, for I fear thou art very much in the right.'

Then Sintram walked solemnly and silently through the castle gate from thence, the pious Rolf after him. Gabrielle conducted the weary baron up to his chamber.

CHAPTER XIX

It was a gloomy journey, which the youth and his fosterer made towards the moon-rock along the wildly entangled valley, that was strewn with ice and snow. Rolf sang at times verses out of ghostly songs, wherein

comfort and peace is promised to the penitent sinner, and Sintram looked at him in return with thankful melancholy. Otherwise neither of them spake a word.

At length—it was already verging towards the morning dawn—Sintram brake the voiceless silence by saying: 'Who are the pair that sit there by the frozen wood-stream? A tall and a little man. They too have surely been driven out into the waste by their own wild hearts. Rolf, knowest thou them? They make me quite shudder.'

'Sir,' returned the old man, 'your disturbed senses lead you astray. A tall fir-sapling stands yonder, and beside it a little weatherbeaten oak-bush, half besnowed, so that it looks somewhat strangely therefrom. No men are sitting there.'

'Rolf, do but look! Do but look there right sharply for an instant. They are moving; they are whispering together.'

'Sir, the morning wind moves the branches, and rustles amid the needles and the yellow corpses of leaves, and ruffles up the snow.'

'Rolf, now they are both coming towards us, now they are standing before us, quite close.'

'Sir, it is we, who in walking come nearer unto them, and the downgoing moon casts their shadows thus giantly and far over the valley.'

'Good evening!' said a hollow voice, and Sintram recognized the mad pilgrim, beside whom the malignant Little Master was standing, looking more hideous than ever.—'You were right, Sir knight!' whispered Rolf, crept back behind Sintram, and drew the sign of the cross over his head and breast.

But the bewildered youth advanced towards the two forms, and said: 'You have always shown a strange

pleasure in being my companions. What mean you thereby? And will ye go with me now to the stone tower? There I will nurse thee, poor pale pilgrim; and as for thee, horrible Master, thee, most wicked of dwarfs, will I make a head shorter, as a reward for yesterday.'

'That were fine!' laughed the Little Master. 'And thou wouldest fancy forsooth, thou hadst thus done a great service to the whole world? And truly, who knows? Something might after all be gained thereby! Only, poor fellow, thou canst not do it.'

But the pilgrim meanwhile nodded his pale head thoughtfully to and fro, saying: 'I believe verily, thou wouldest gladly have me, and I too would gladly come, but I may not yet. In the meantime have patience! Thou wilt still quite assuredly see me come, but late, and first must we yet once visit thy father together, and then thou wilt also learn to know me by my name, my poor friend.'

'If thou playest at cross purposes with me again!' threatened the Little Master, addressing the pilgrim; but the latter pointed with his long dry hand towards the already uprising sun, and said: 'Hinder that for once and me, if thou canst!'

Here the first gleams of light fell upon the snow, and the Little Master ran muttering down a hanging crag, but the pilgrim walked amidst the glorifying rays tranquilly and with great solemnity along his way to a nigh mountain-fortress. In a short time one heard the death-bell tolling from its chapel.

'In God's name,' whispered the pious Rolf to his knight, 'In God's name, Sir Sintram, what sort of companions have you got here? The one cannot bear the dear God's beautiful sun, the other has scarcely entered that dwelling, when the tidings of death begin

to wail after his footsteps. Can he perchance be a murderer?'

'Not that, I believe;' said Sintram. 'He seems to me the better of the two. Only that he will not come with me is in truth a strange perverseness. I invited him friendly, did I not? I think he sings well, and if so, he should have sung me a lullaby. Since mother lives in the convent, nobody sings me lullabies any more.'

At this gentle recollection his eyes began to be dewy. But he knew not himself what he had been uttering, for he was quite wild and confused in spirit.

They arrived at the Moon-rock, they climbed up to the stone tower. The warder, a wild, dark man, particularly devoted to the young knight on account of his very perturbedness and gloomily wild behaviour, hastened to let down the drawbridge. Silently did they greet one another, silently did Sintram enter, and the joyless gates closed with a crash behind the future hermit.

CHAPTER XX

Yes truly, a hermit, or something but a little more social, did the poor Sintram now become! For towards the approaching holy Christmas-feast his fearful dream came over him, and seized upon him this time so terribly, that all the yeomen and servants ran screaming out of the fortress, and ventured not themselves again therein. There remained no one with him, except his Rolf and the old warder.

Sintram became tranquil again indeed, but he now walked about so still and pale, that he might have been taken for a wandering corpse. No consolation of the pious Rolf, no friendly godly song could any more avail; and the warder with his wild, scarred face, his

head rendered almost bald by a huge sword wound, his sullen silence, was almost like the yet gloomier shadow of the unhappy knight to look upon. Rolf thought of summoning the heaven-gifted chaplain of the castle of Drontheim; but how could he leave his master alone with the dark warder, a man who had ever forced from him a secret shuddering? Biorn had already kept the wild, strange warrior a long time in his service, and honoured him on account of his rock-firm fidelity and impetuous courage, without the knight or any one else whatever knowing whence the warder came and who he really was. Yea, very few persons knew how to call him by his name, which besides seemed the less needful, inasmuch as he entered into discourse with nobody. He was only just the warder of the stone tower upon the Moon-rock, and nothing further.

Rolf, therefore, recommended the deep cares of his heart unto the dear God, confiding, that he would in due time help, and the dear God did help.

For exactly upon the holy evening before Christmas the bell at the drawbridge tinkled, and when Rolf looked over the battlements, the chaplain of Drontheim was standing without; in strange company indeed, for beside him appeared the mad pilgrim, and the dead men's bones upon his dark cloak lightened upwards quite fearfully beneath the glimmer of the stars; but the neighbourhood of the chaplain penetrated the good Rolf with too much joy, to allow room for any doubt whatever; 'Besides,' thought he, 'whoso comes with him, he surely comes well!' He therefore let them both in with honour-yielding haste, and conducted them up into the hall, where Sintram was sitting beneath the light of a single flaring lamp, pale

and motionless. Rolf was forced to support and lead the mad pilgrim up the steps, for he was quite stiff with the frost.

'I bring you a greeting from your mother;' said the entering chaplain, and immediately a sweet smile passed over the young knight's face, and his deathly paleness yielded to a soft blush. 'Oh God,' whispered he, 'does then my mother still live, and will she then even deign to know of me?'

'She is gifted with a high and very mighty power of sight,' returned the chaplain, 'and whatever deed you may bring to effect, and whatever you may omit: they are all imaged to her—sometimes when awake, sometimes when sleeping—free from all deceit in many wonderful visions. Now too she knows of your deep anguish, and she sends me, who am the father confessor of her convent, hither, to comfort you, but also at the same time to warn you, for, as she asserts, and as I also am disposed to believe, many and singularly heavy trials await you still.'

Sintram bowed himself forwards with his arms crossed over his breast, and said, mildly smiling: 'Much has been vouchsafed unto me; more than I in my boldest hours had dared to hope, ten thousand times more, in my mother's greeting and in your address, reverend Sir, and all this after so cruelly low a fall, as I have but now so recently made. The compassion of the Lord is great, and let him send me for penance and trial any burthen however heavy; I hope that with his help I shall support it.'

Meanwhile the door opened, and the warder entered with a torch, in the glowing red gleams of which he looked quite blood coloured. He gazed in dismay at the mad pilgrim, who had just then sunken

back fainting upon a seat, supported and nursed by Rolf; he then stared astonished into the chaplain's face, and murmured at length: 'A strange meeting! I believe, the hour for confession and for atonement is come.'

'I believe so too;' replied the priest, who had perceived the low whisper. 'It seems in truth to be a kindly day, rich in grace. The poor man there, when I found him half frozen upon the way, would resolutely confess to me, before he would follow me to a warming hearth. Do like him, my dark, fire-illumined warrior, and put not off your good purpose for a single second.'—Herewith he walked together with the beckoning warder out of the chamber, but turned back to say: 'Knight and squire! take good care meanwhile of my sick charge.'

Sintram and Rolf did according to the chaplain's behest, and when the pilgrim in consequence of their refreshments at length again opened his eyes, the young knight said with a friendly smile: 'Seest thou, thou now visitest me after all. Wherefore didst thou refuse me then, when I a few nights since so earnestly intreated thee thereto? I may, indeed, have spoken somewhat astray and violently. Wert thou intimidated thereby perchance?'

A sudden terror convulsed the pilgrim's face, but he immediately looked up again with friendly meekness at Sintram, saying: 'O dear, dear Sir, I am so infinitely devoted to you. Only do not always talk of the things which you say have occurred between you and me. That always terrifies me so very much. For, Sir, either am I mad and have forgotten it all, or he must have met you in the forest, who seems to me like my very mighty twin brother——'

Sintram gently laid his hand on the pilgrim's

mouth, while he replied: 'Only say no more about it. I will be silent with all my heart.' Neither he nor Rolf well knew what it really was that appeared to them so terrible in the affair; but they trembled both.

After a short silence the pilgrim began: 'I will rather sing you a song, a mild comfortable song. Have you not a guitar at hand?'

Rolf brought one forth, and the pilgrim sitting half upright in the arm-chair, sang the following words:

Whoso nigh unto his bourn
Feels thrilling through his limbs a warning breeze,
Let him turn,
Turn with hands, with spirit yearn
Upwards to the door of grace,
His hope there place,
And God will grant him ease.

See you the east all sparkling?
Hear you the angels singing
On the young morning's breath?
Thus have you long strayed darkling;
And now assistance bringing
Comes mild and gracious death.
Greet him with friendly measures,
And he grows friendly too,
And turns your pains to pleasures;
So is he wont to do.

Whoso nigh unto his bourn
Feels thrilling through his limbs a warning breeze,
Let him turn,
Turn with hands, with spirit yearn
Upwards to the door of grace,
His hope there place,
And God will grant him ease.

'Amen!' said Sintram and Rolf, folding their hands, and while the last notes of the guitar were solemnly

dying away, the chaplain and the warder came slowly and softly into the chamber.

'I am bringing a beautiful Christmas gift,' said the priest. 'After a long, heavy time, reconciliation and peace of conscience are here returning unto a noble, erring spirit. It is unto thee, thou poor pilgrim: and do thou, my Sintram, in joyful reliance upon God take unto thyself from hence a refreshing example.'

'More than twenty years since,' began the warder on the chaplain's wink to relate, 'more than twenty years since, I was driving my sheep as a bold shepherd up the mountain-side. Then there came after me a young knightly hero: they named him Weigand the Slim; he wished to purchase from me my favourite lambkin for his beautiful bride, and friendly offered me for it much red gold. I refused him insolently. Our overbold youth boiled up in us both; his sword-stroke hurled me senseless down a precipice.'

'Not dead?' asked the pilgrim scarce audibly.

'I am no ghost;' returned the warder sullenly, and then upon a grave wink of the priest proceeded more meekly as follows:

'Slowly did I recover and in loneliness by use of the healing means which, as a shepherd, I could easily find in our mountain valleys so rich in herbs. When I again came forth, no man knew me with my scarred face and my bald-grown skull. I heard indeed the tidings pass through the country, how on account of that deed Sir Weigand the Slim had been cast off by his fair bride Verena, and how he preyed upon himself, and how she wished to go into the cloister, but her father persuaded her to wed the great Biorn. Hereupon a horrible thirst for revenge came into my heart, and I denied my name and kinsmen and home, and

entered as a strange wild man into the service of the mighty Biorn, in order that the Slim Weigand might still ever remain a murderer, and that I might feed upon his sorrow. So have I then also fed thereon, all these long years through, fearfully fed upon his self-banishment, upon his comfortless return home, upon his madness. But to-day'—and a hot stream of tears gushed from his eyes—'but to-day God has broken the hardness of my heart, and my dear Lord Sir Weigand hold yourself no longer to be a murderer, and say that you will forgive me, and pray for him who has brought upon you such horrible woe, and——'

His sobbing choked his words. He sank down at the feet of the pilgrim, who forgiving him and weeping for joy folded him in his arms.

CHAPTER XXI

THE edification of this hour softened down again from this heavenly, dazzling enthusiasm into the clear, calmly rational contemplation of the realities of life, and the healed Weigand laid aside the mantle with the dead men's bones, saying: 'I placed part of my penance in the bearing about these fearful relics, under the thought that some of them might belong to the man whom I had murdered. On this account I sought about for them deep in the beds of dried up wood-torrents, high in the nests of the eagles and vultures. And during my search it was unto me at times—can it perchance have been a mere illusion!—as if I met some one, who looked outwardly almost like myself, but a great deal, a great deal more powerful, and yet still paler and still more wasted away——'

A beseeching wink from Sintram arrested the course of these words. Weigand bowed to him, softly smiling, and said:

'You now know the deep, fathomlessly deep sorrow, which gnawed at my heart, fully. Hence will my shyness and my intense love for you be no longer a riddle unto your heart and your gentleness. For, my young knight, however much you resemble your fearful father, you yet have your mother's heart and gentleness, and a reflection of her light brightens over your pale stern features, like the morning glow, that flows with soft gleams of joy around icebergs and over besnowed valleys. And alas! what a long time have you been so lonely within yourself, in the midst of the buzzing crowds of men! And how long is it that you have not seen your mother, my poor beloved Sintram!'

'This feels to me also, as it were a fountain in the wilderness,' replied the youth, 'and I should perchance be healed altogether, if I could only keep you with me long, and weep with you, my dear Sir. But I already forbode: you will now very soon be taken away from me.'

'I believe, truly,' said the pilgrim, 'my late song was almost my last, and contains a very near, near prophecy about myself. But alas! the soul of man is such an evermore thirsting earthly soil—the more blessings God vouchsafes unto us, the more beseechingly do we look out for new blessings—that I would gladly intreat for yet one thing more before the blessed end which I hope for.—It will not indeed fall to my lot,' added he with sinking voice, 'for of such a high gift I feel myself all too unworthy.'

'It will fall to your lot nevertheless!' said the chaplain cheerfully and aloud. 'Shall not he be exalted,

who hath humbled himself? And I may well lead him who is purified from murder to take a farewell of Verena's holy and forgiving face.'

The pilgrim stretched forth both his hands on high towards heaven, and an unuttered prayer flowed from his gleaming eyes, his blessedly smiling lips. But Sintram looked mournfully upon the ground, and sighed softly to himself: 'Oh, if one might go with him!'

'Thou poor, good Sintram,' said the chaplain with gentle friendliness, 'I have heard thee indeed, but it is not yet time. The evil powers may still raise up their angry heads against thee, and Verena must restrain her yearnings and thine, until all is pure in thy soul, as in hers. Comfort thyself therewith, that God inclines towards thee, and that the longed-for joy will come; if not here, yet assuredly hereafter.'

But the pilgrim, as if coming to himself out of a trance, rose up in strength from his seat and spake: 'Does it please you to wander forth with me, Sir Chaplain? By the time the sun stands in heaven, we may be at the convent gate, close, and I too quite close to heaven.'

In vain did the chaplain and Rolf place before him his feebleness; he said smiling, that this was not in the least to be thought of here, and girded himself, and tuned the guitar, which he requested as the companion of his way. His resolute bearing overcame every objection almost without words; and the chaplain too had already accoutred himself for the journey, when the pilgrim looked very much moved towards Sintram, who in strange weariness had sunken down half slumbering upon a couch, and said: 'Wait yet a while. I know he wishes for a lullaby song from me first.'

The youth's friendly smile seemed to say Yes, and the pilgrim touched the strings with gentle finger, and sang:

Sleep quietly, sweet boy!
  Thy mother dear has sped
This soothing lay's mild joy
  To play around thy bed.
She prays far hence away
  For her dear Sintram's bliss,
And hither she would stray,
  But has no time for this.

And when thou dost awaken,
  In every after deed,
Ere thou thy part hast taken,
  This lay's good counsel heed:
List to thy mother's voice,
  If aye it saith, if no;
Whate'er may tempt thy choice,
  Astray thou ne'er wilt go.

If thou wilt rightly listen,
  And noble courses seek,
Oft gleams will round thee glisten,
  Oft breezes fan thy cheek.
Then calm thine inward war,
  For she approves thy part,
Who, though from thee afar,
  Yet loves thee heart to heart.

O dew-distilling flower,
  O blessed light of life,
Whose heavenly healing power
  Allays hell's furious strife!
Sleep quietly, sweet boy!
  Thy mother dear has sped
This soothing lay's mild joy,
  To play around thy bed.

Sintram slept smiling and softly breathing in a deep slumber. Rolf and the warder remained sitting beside his bed, while the two travellers went forth beneath the mild starry night.

CHAPTER XXII

THE morning was already advancing fast, when Rolf, who had been nodding a little, awoke at a gentle singing, and when he looked round, he beheld with amazement that it glided from the lips of the warder. The latter said, as if in explanation: 'Sir Weigand is singing thus now at the convent gates, and they are opening to him friendly;' after which the old Rolf again fell asleep, uncertain, whether he had heard this when waking, or in a dream.

After a while, however, the bright sunlight awakened him anew, and as he started up, he saw the countenance of the warder wonderfully illumined by the ruddy morning rays, and altogether the features of the formerly fearful being gleamed with a pleasing, yea a quite childly meekness. At the same time the singular man was listening to the still air, as if he hearkened unto a highly delightful discourse, or to a glorious music, and when Rolf was about to speak, he beckoned to him beseechingly, that he should remain silent, and continued straining himself in his listening attitude.

At length he sank slowly and comfortably back upon his seat, whispering: 'Thank God! she has granted him his last request; he is to be buried in the convent churchyard, and now has he also forgiven me from the lowest bottom of his heart. I can tell you, he finds a truly gentle end.'

Rolf trusted not himself to ask, nor to awaken his

master; it was unto him, as if one who had already departed this life were speaking unto him.

The warder remained yet some while silent, and smiled ever cheerfully forwards. At length he raised himself up a little, listened again, and said: 'It is over. The bells sound very beautifully. We have conquered. Oh, how very easy and sweet does the dear God make it!'

And so it was then too. He stretched himself back wearied, and his soul was freed from the gloomy body.

Rolf now gently awakened his young knight, and pointed to the smiling dead man. Then Sintram too smiled; he and his pious squire sank upon their knees and prayed to God for the departed spirit. Then they arose, and bare the cold body into the vault, and waited beside it with consecrated tapers for the return of the chaplain. That the pilgrim would not return, they well knew.

And so about the hour of noon the chaplain did in fact return alone. He could scarcely do more than confirm what was already known to them. Only he added a refreshing hopeful greeting from Sintram's mother unto her son, and that the blessed Weigand had fallen asleep like a wearied child, whilst Verena was still ever holding the crucifix before him with silent friendliness.

'Thus the Lord grants us ease!' sang Sintram softly to himself, and they prepared for the warder, now so mild, his last bed, and lowered him into it, solemnizing him with all befitting usages. The chaplain was forced to depart again immediately after, but he could yet at his farewell say affectionately to Sintram: 'Thy dear mother knows how pious and still and good thou now art.'

CHAPTER XXIII

In the castle of Sir Biorn Flame-eye the holy evening was celebrated not quite so purely and beautifully, but the will of God nevertheless came to pass therein right visibly.

Folko had at the request of the castle lord let himself be led into the hall by Gabrielle, and the three were now sitting about the round stone table at a costly banquet, on each side at large dining-boards the vassals of both the knights, according to the Northern custom, in the full splendour of their armour. Torches and lamps lit up the lofty chamber almost dazzlingly.

The deeper night was already beginning its solemn reign, and Gabrielle gently admonished the wounded Baron to break up; this was perceived by Sir Biorn, who said: 'You are in the right, fair lady; our hero needs rest. Only let us yet beforehand give its due to an ancient, venerable usage.'

And upon his signal four men-at-arms brought forward a huge boar image, which seemed to look upon, as if it were wrought out of vain gold, bearing it with solemnity, and set it down in the midst of the stone table. Biorn's vassals arose reverently, and placed their helmets beneath their arms, and so did the castle lord himself.

'What is this to end in?' asked Folko very gravely.

'What thy fathers and mine were wont to do at every Jul-feast;' returned Biorn. 'We are going to make vows by the boar of Freya, and at the same time to let a solemn draught go round.'

'What our ancestors called the Jul-feast,' said Folko,

'we celebrate not. We are good Christians and celebrate the holy Christmas-feast.'

'Do the one, but leave not the other out!' replied Biorn. 'My ancestors are too dear to me, for me to forget their hero customs. Whoso chooses to think otherwise may do according to his wisdom: but that hinders not me. I vow by this golden boar image——' and he was already stretching forth his hand to lay it solemnly thereon.

But Folko of Montfaucon cried: 'In our holy Redeemer's name, hold! Where I am, and can yet breathe and can yet will, there shall no one go through the customs of the wild heathendom undisturbed.'

Biorn Flame-eye looked wrathfully upon him. The vassals of both lords parted from one another amidst the heavy rattling of their breastplates, and drew themselves up in two bands, each behind its leader, on both sides of the hall. One saw already how here and there the helmets and headpieces were buckled on faster.

'Bethink thyself yet what thou art doing;' said Biorn. 'I was about to vow an eternal bond of amity, yea I was about to vow thankful vassalage unto the house of Montfaucon; but if thou disturbest me in the customs, which I have inherited from my fathers, then look to thy head, and to all that is dear unto thee. My anger no longer knows any bounds.'

Folko beckoned to the pale-growing Gabrielle that she should step back behind his men-at-arms, and said to her: 'Courage and good cheer, noble lady! Many weaker Christians have already for the sake of God and of the holy church run greater hazards than seem to await us here. Trust me, the Baron of Montfaucon is not so easily ensnared by anybody.'

Gabrielle drew back according to Folko's desire, in some degree tranquillized by his bold, commanding smile; but this very smile made Biorn's fierceness flame up so much the more. He a second time stretched forth his hand towards the boar image, and might be upon the point of uttering a very terrible vow; when the Baron snatched an iron glove of Biorn's from the table, and his sound left arm struck therewith so forcible a blow upon the golden image, that shattered into two halves it fell cracking upon the pavement. The castle lord and his vassals stood around as if turned to stone.

Soon, however, the brazen fists rattled against the swords, and shields were lifted from the wall, and an angry, death-boding murmur went through the chamber. Upon Folko's wink, one of his followers had reached him a battle-axe; he swung it on high mightily with his left hand, and stood like an avenging cherub in the midst of the hall, and spake out these words through the tumult with judge-like calmness:

'What will ye, infatuated Norsemen? What wilt thou, sinful castle lord?—Ye are surely become heathens, and if so, I trust to show you when wielding my weapon in battle, that my God has not placed the might of victory in my right arm alone. But if ye can yet hear, then hear me! Upon this same accursed boar image, which now through God's help is dashed to pieces, didst thou, Biorn, lay thy fist, when thou swarest to destroy the men of the sea-towns, whensoever they should fall into thy power. And Gotthard Lenz came, and Rudlieb came, driven by the storm upon your coast. What didst thou then, thou fierce Biorn? What did ye then after him, ye who were with him at the Jul-feast?—Make trial of your strength

against me! The Lord will be with me, as he was with those pious men. Cheerily then to arms! And'—he turned round towards his warriors—'Gotthard and Rudlieb is our war-cry!'

Then Biorn dropped his already drawn sword, his vassals became still, and no eye in the Norwegian band raised itself any more from the ground. At length one after the other began quietly to steal away; so that at last only Biorn remained standing quite alone over against the Baron and his men-at-arms. He seemed, however, scarcely to remark his abandonment; but he sank upon his knees, stretched his gleaming sword along by his side, pointed to the shattered boar image, and said: 'Do unto me as unto that. I have deserved nothing better. Only for this one thing I intreat, only for this one thing: cast not the shame upon me, great Baron, of visiting another Norwegian fortress.'

'I fear you not,' replied Folko after some musing, 'and so far as it may be, I forgive you readily.' Hereupon he drew the cross over Biorn Flame-eye's wild form, and let himself be conducted by Gabrielle to his chamber. The vassals of the house of Montfaucon walked after him proudly and in silence.

Henceforward the hard will of the fierce castle lord was wholly broken, and he awaited with increased humility every wink of Folko or of Gabrielle. They, however, drew back more and more within the cheerful circle of their apartments, where still ever in the midst of the iciest Norwegian winter bloomed the mirthful life of May. The Baron's wounded condition hindered not the evening joys, full of the delight of tales and the play of harp-strings and the magic of songs; on the contrary it afforded a new, pleasing picture when the handsome tall knight leant upon the

arm of his gentle mistress, and both thus almost interchanging forms and services wandered along through the halls that sparkled with torches, and scattered their graceful greetings like flowers among the assembled damsels and vassals.

Of the poor Sintram meanwhile little or no mention at all was made. The late wild behaviour of his father had heightened the horror, wherewith Gabrielle bethought herself of the youth's self-accusation, and because Folko was quite immovably silent thereupon, this very silence made her forebode mysteries so much the more terrible. Yea, even the Baron was visited with a secret shuddering, when he thought upon the pale black-haired youth. Had not his remorse bordered almost upon stark despair? and was not everybody ignorant what he was now really doing upon the Moon-rock in the ill-famed stone tower? There came from his runaway attendants whispered reports, how the evil spirit had now utterly and altogether come over Sintram there, how nobody could any longer hold out with him, and the dark, mysterious warder had already suffered for his attachment by death. Folko was scarce able to ward away from himself the fearful suspicions, which painted the lonely youth to him as a hardened magician.

And truly evil spirits might be rustling about the excommunicated Sintram, but without his calling them. Thus did it often seem unto him in his dreams, as if the bad enchantress Venus were hovering in a golden car drawn by winged cats over the battlements of the stone tower, and were laughing down from thence at him: 'Foolish Sintram, foolish Sintram, hadst thou but followed the Little Master! Thou wouldest now be lying in Helen's arms, and the Moon-

rock would be called the love-rock, and the stone tower would be called the rose tower. And thy own pale form would have fallen off from thee, and thy dark hair—for thou art only bewitched, my youth—and thine eyes would shine more mildly, thy cheeks more bloomingly, thy locks more goldenly, than what the world was ever wont to wonder at in Sir Paris. Oh how Helen would love thee!' Then she showed him also in a vapoury mirror, how he was kneeling before Gabrielle as a wondrously handsome hero, and how she with a softly blushing morning glow sank into his arms.

When he now started up from his slumber after such visions, he was wont with anxious haste to grasp the sword and the scarf once bestowed upon him by his mistress, as one that is shipwrecked seizes after the saving planks, and to pour forth hot tears thereon, and secretly to whisper unto himself: 'So there has been at least one single hour in my poor life, when I was worthy and happy.'

Once he started up about midnight from similar dreams, only this time with harrowing terror, for it had been unto him, as if the beautiful, alluring features of the enchantress Venus had confused themselves towards the end of her speech, through the strange scorn wherewith she looked down upon him, and as if she now seemed almost like unto the hideous Little Master.

The youth knew not how better to calm his perturbed spirit, than by hanging Gabrielle's sword and scarf about his shoulder and hastening out beneath the solemnly glittering starry dome of the wintry sky. Amongst the leafless oaks, the snow-encumbered pines, which stood singly upon the high wall of the tower, he walked in deep thought to and fro.

Then was it as if a gloomy moan of pain arose up out of the moat, which at times tried to soften into singing, but from internal anguish could not. Upon Sintram's: 'Who's there?' everything was still. But when he was silent and began to wander on further, the fearful ruttle and moaning brake forth anew, as though from a dying breast.

Sintram overcame the horror, which seemed as it were to tear him back by his upstarting hair, and climbed silently down into the dry rock-hewn castle moat. He was already so deep in it that the stars no longer shone upon him; a concealed form was moving beneath him; at this he suddenly glided down the rugged precipice with involuntary swiftness, and stood beside the moaning creature. The latter forthwith left off from its groaning, and laughed forth from its broad, folding, woman's garments, like one mad: 'Hoho, my fellow! Hoho, my fellow! That went a little too rapidly even for thee! So thou canst tumble, tumble, tumble as well as I. Aye, aye, so it goes, and only look, thou standest now after all no whit higher than I, my pious, mighty youth! Submit, submit thyself patiently thereto!'

'What wilt thou with me? Why laughest thou? Why criest thou?' asked Sintram vehemently.

'I might ask thee the self-same question,' returned the dark form, 'and thou wouldest be far less able to answer me, than I thee. Why laughest thou? Why criest thou?—Poor creature!—But I will show thee a curiosity in thy stone tower, whereof thou yet knowest nothing at all. Look here for a moment!'

And the muffled form scratched and scraped against the rock, and a little iron door opened, and a black passage led into the endless mighty depth.

'Wilt thou go with me?' whispered the strange being. 'This leads to thy father's castle by the very nearest road. In half an hour we shall come forth out of the earth, and that in thy beautiful mistress's bedchamber. The Duke Menelaus shall be lying in a magic sleep; of that let me take care. And then thou takest the soft, slender form in thine arms, and bearest her back hither unto thy Moon-rock, and what seemed lost through thy former irresoluteness is won back again.'

Sintram trembled visibly to and fro, fearfully possessed by the glow of love and the anguish of conscience. But at length pressing his sword and scarf to his heart, he cried out: 'Oh that one fairest, most glorious hour of my life! And let all my joy be lost, to that gleaming hour I still will cling fast!'

'A fair, gleaming hour!' was laughed forth from the disguise, as if by a hostile echo. 'Knowest thou then, whom thou didst conquer? An old, good friend, who only deported himself so bear-baitingly, in order to let himself at last be thrown down by thee for thy glorification! Wilt thou convince thyself? Wilt thou look?'

And the dark garments flapped back from the little form, and the dwarfish warrior in strange armour, with the golden horns upon his helmet, and the sickle-shaped halberd in his fist, the same whom Sintram deemed he had slain upon Niflung's heath, stood before him, and laughed: 'Thou seest, my young knight, upon the whole wide world there is nothing but dream and froth; hold therefore right fast to the dream that refreshes thee, swallow down the froth that thou relishest! Down with me then into the subterraneous passage! It leads up to thine idol Helen.—Or wouldest thou know thy friend a little nearer first?'

The visor flew back; the Little Master's hideous face stared at the knight, and the latter asked as if half in a dream: 'Art thou perchance the wicked enchantress, dame Venus, too?'

'A piece of her!' laughed the Little Master; 'or rather she is a piece of me. And only bestir thyself, so that thou mayest be disenchanted, and transformed into the handsome Prince Paris; then, O Prince Paris' —and his voice grew into an alluring song—'Then, O Prince Paris, shall I be fair, as thou!'

At the same instant the pious Rolf appeared above upon the battlement, and with a consecrated taper in his lantern cast its light down into the moat, seeking for the young knight whom he had missed. 'In God's name, Sir Sintram,' he cried out, 'what is that ghost of the body which you slew upon Niflung's heath, and which I could never bury, doing by your side?'

'Seest thou there? Hearest thou there?' whispered the Little Master, and drew back into the shade of the subterraneous passage. 'The wise gentleman there above knows me right well. Thy heroic feat was nought. Pluck then merrily the joys of life?'

But Sintram sprang with powerful self-constraint back into the bright circle, which the lantern held down by Rolf described, and cried threateningly: 'Depart from me thou restless spirit! I know, I bear a name within me, wherein thou canst have no part.'

Angrily and in alarm the Little Master ran into the passage, and dashed to the iron door behind him with a crash. It was, as if he were heard within moaning and croaking.

But Sintram climbed up the wall, and beckoned to his old fosterer to be silent, while he only said: 'One of my best joys, yea the very best of all my joys has been

taken from me, but still with God's help I am not yet lost.'

Beneath the glimmering of the next morning glow, he and Rolf walled up the door to the perilous passage with enormous flag-stones.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE long northern winter was at length over; the woods rustled merrily in their bright green dress, friendly spots of grass beckoned down from the cliffs, the valleys became green, the brooks gushed along; only on the highest mountain-brows did the snow yet rest, and Folko's and Gabrielle's bark rocked to and fro ready to sail upon the sunny waves of the sea.

The Baron now restored to health, strong and fresh as if nothing hostile had ever checked his hero-might, was standing one morning with his beautiful wife upon the shore, and the graceful pair, glad at their approaching return to their home, cheerfully watched their attendants who were packing up their luggage, and lading it into the vessel.

Then said one of the band, in the course of the converse that was wandering variously to and fro: 'What, however, seems to me the most awful and the wonderfullest of all things in this north country, is the stone tower upon the Moon-rock; inside of it indeed I have never been, but when during our hunting I saw it peer over upon us above the fir-tops, my breast was always wont to tighten, as if something unheard of must be housing there. And a few weeks since—the snow was still lying hard everywhere throughout the valleys—I came unexpectedly quite close up to the strange building. The young Sir Sintram was walking

about upon the walls quite alone beneath the breaking dusk, like a departed hero-spirit, and touched a guitar in his arms with low, low notes of sorrow, and sighed so right heartily and grievously thereto——'

The speaker's voice was overpowered by the noise of the crowd, and he was also approaching the ship with his ready-tied bundle, so that Folko and Gabrielle distinguished not the close of his speech.

But the beautiful mistress gazed upon her knight with tear-bedewed eyes, and sighed: 'The lonely Moon-rock lies over towards those mountain-tops, does it not? My heart aches for the poor, poor Sintram.'

'I understand thee, thou pure gracious woman, and the pious compassion in thy tender breast;' returned Folko, and he forthwith let his most swift-footed Barbary nag be brought forth, charged the men-at-arms with the guardianship of their noble lady, and sprang, attended by Gabrielle's thanking smile, into the saddle, and up the valley which led towards the stone tower.

Sintram was sitting upon a grass-plot before the drawbridge, touching the strings of his guitar, and letting single tears trickle upon the golden wire-work, almost as Montfaucon's follower had described him. Suddenly there breathed over him something like the shadow of a cloud, and he looked up, deeming some returning flight of cranes might be sweeping through the air. But the heavens were quite empty and clear and blue, and while the young knight was yet musing thereupon, a large bright javelin fell down from the battlement of the richly stored tower just before his feet.

'Take it up! Use it well! Thy foe is at hand. At

hand too is the vanishing of thy most beloved bliss!' Thus sounded a distinct whisper in his ear, and it was unto him, as if he saw the Little Master's shadow glide along close beside him into some nigh cleft in the rock or other within the moat.

But at the same moment also a tall, gigantic, spare form passed through the valley, in some measure like unto the deceased pilgrim, only very, very much larger, and raised its long dry arm with fearful threatening on high, and sank down into an old burial-vault.

At the very self-same instant came Sir Folko of Montfaucon springing up the Moon-rock swift as the wind, and must doubtless have perceived something of the strange apparitions, for as he remained halting close behind Sintram, he looked somewhat pale, and asked gravely in a low voice:

'Who were the two persons, Sir, with whom you were just now conversing here?'

'That is known to the dear God;' replied Sintram. 'I know them not.'

'If they be but known to the dear God!' cried Montfaucon. 'But I fear he knows very little indeed any longer of you and of all your goings on.'

'You speak dreadfully bitter words:' answered Sintram. 'But I must, since that ill-fated evening—alas, and even since an earlier time!—contentedly bear everything whatsoever from you.—Dear Sir, you may believe me, I know not my fearful companions, I call them not, and I know not what curse full of horror has bound them fast to my heels. The dear God meanwhile, I hope, knows of me, as a careful shepherd forgets not even the worst and wildest lamb, that has gone astray from the flock, and now cries after him with yearning voice amidst the dark waste.'

Hereat the noble Baron's estrangement gave way altogether. Two bright tears stood in his eyes, and he said: 'No, assuredly God has not forgotten thee, only forget not thou the dear God. I came not moreover to reprove thee. I came to bless thee, in Gabrielle's name and my own. The Lord preserve thee, the Lord restrain thee, the Lord purify thee. And, Sintram, from the far coasts of Normandy I shall cast my eyes over upon thee, and I shall learn how thou strivest against the evil that weighs upon thy poor life, and when thou hast once shaken it off, and standest forth as a noble conqueror over curse and murder, then shalt thou receive a pledge of reward and of love from me, more glorious than thou or I at this moment conceive.'

The words flowed from the Baron's mouth in prophetic guise, he himself only half understood what he spake, after a friendly greeting turned his noble Barbary steed, and flew down again along the vale-path towards the shore.

'Fool, fool, triple fool!' whispered the Little Master's angry voice in Sintram's ear, but the old Rolf was singing his morning hymn clearly and distinctly within the castle, and its last verse was as follows:

Oh! blest are they,
Who cast away
All that this world desires!
God grants to them
A diadem
Among his angel choirs.

At this a blessed delight penetrated into Sintram's heart, and he looked still more joyfully around, than in the hour when Gabrielle gave him sword and scarf, and Folko struck him a knight.

CHAPTER XXV

The Baron and his beautiful housewife were already sailing upon the wide sea with a favouring spring breeze, yea the coasts of Normandy were already mounting up out of the waves before them, and Biorn Flame-eye yet ever sat dark and speechless in his castle. He had not taken a farewell of them. There was more awe-stricken defiance than loving reverence for Montfaucon in his soul, especially since the incident with the boar image, and bitterly did the thought gnaw at his proud heart, that the great Baron, the bloom and glory of his whole race, had come in joy to visit him, and was now departing dissatisfied, with severe reproachful seriousness. He held it continually before his eyes, and carved it as if with thorns upon his breast, how all had come to pass, and how all might have come to pass otherwise, and he ever fancied that he heard the songs, which even a distant after-world must yet sing of this journey of the great Folko, and of the worthlessness of the wild Biorn.

At length, full of fierce rage, he tore asunder the bands of his gloomy moping, burst forth from his castle with all his men-at-arms, and commenced one of the most tremendous and unjust feuds which he had ever yet fought. Sintram heard his father's war-horn sound, gave the charge of the stone tower to the old Rolf, and armed for battle sprang forth.

But the flames of the huts and farm-yards amongst the mountains arose on high before him, and flashed upon him with their fearful fiery writing, what kind of war Sir Biorn was carrying on. Then he still indeed advanced further unto his father's banner, but he there only offered his mediation, avouching that in so

hateful a contest he would never lay his hand upon his noble sword, even though the stone tower were to sink down beneath the vengeance of the foe, and the family castle together with it. Biorn threw the spear, which he was just holding in his hand, in mad rage at his son. The murderous weapon hissed by him, Sintram remained halting with open visor, stirred no limb in his defence, and said: 'Father, do what you may. But in your godless war I go not forth.'

Biorn Flame-eye smiled indeed scornfully: 'It seems, I am always to retain an overseer here; the delicate French knight is relieved by my son!'—But he nevertheless went into himself, accepted Sintram's mediation, compensated for the damages he had inflicted, and drew darkly back to his family castle, while Sintram returned again up the Moon-rock.

Similar events were henceforth no rarity. It came unto this, that Sintram was regarded as the guardian lord of all those whom his father in the fullness of his bursting wrath persecuted; but still the young knight was at times borne onwards by his own fierceness, so that he went hand in hand with his raging father in his fearful deeds. Then Biorn was wont to laugh full of hideous satisfaction, and to say: 'Only look, my son dear, how our torches blaze up out of the yards! how the blood has rushed out of those corpses after our swords! I see after all, however thou mayest bear thyself, thou art and remainest my true dear heir!'

After such waste wanderings astray Sintram knew not how to find any other consolation than by galloping unto the chaplain at Drontheim, and confessing to him his misery and his sin. The priest then absolved him indeed from his guilt after befitting penance and

repentance, and raised up the remorseful youth again; but he also said often:

'Oh! how near, how very near wert thou already to the undergoing thy last trial, and then looking victorious into Verena's face, and reconciling all things! Now thou hast again hurled thyself back for years. Bethink thyself, my son, the life of man passes away, and if thou art ever anon slipping downwards, how wilt thou yet on this side climb up to the top?'

And years mounted up, and years went down, and Biorn's head became snow-white, and out of the youth Sintram was become a man almost growing old: the aged Rolf was scarce able any more to leave the stone tower, and said at times: 'That I yet live is indeed a great overburthen to me, but also in some measure a high comfort, since I think that the dear God has yet a great, very great joy in store for me here below. And that must concern you, dear Sir knight Sintram; for what else in the world could possibly give me joy?'

But everything remained as it was, and Sintram's fearful dreams about Christmas became every year rather more savage than milder.

The holy season was now again approaching, and the tormented knight felt more anxious at heart than ever. At times, when he was reckoning up the nights until then, a cold sweat came over his forehead, and he said: 'Rely upon it, my dear old fosterfather, this time something quite fearfully decisive hangs over me.'

Now he discovered in himself one evening an alarm that urged him towards his father. It was unto him, as if the most horrible of all things were now going on in the family castle, and Rolf in vain reminded him that the snow was lying high as a house in the valleys, in vain did he even hint at the possibility, that the

fearful dream might come over the knight during the lonely darkness in the mountains.—'Worse it cannot be, than if I remain here;' returned Sintram, drew his horse out of the stall, and trotted forth into the growing darkness.

The noble steed slipped and stumbled and fell along the pathless ways, and every time the knight plucked him up again, and drove him only more hastily and more anxiously forward to the longed for and dreaded goal. Yet he would probably have scarce reached it, had not his faithful hound Skovmaerke run along by his side. He sought out for his dear master the paths that had been blown away, and lured him towards them with a merry barking, and by whining warned him from the precipices and from the deceitful smoothness of the ice beneath the snow. In this manner they arrived at length about midnight at the family castle. The windows of the hall lightened in their faces richly illuminated, as if a solemn feast were celebrated therein; there sounded also through the lattices something like a hollow song. Sintram hastily gave his steed to some attendants in the castle court, and ran up the steps, while Skovmaerke remained with his friend the horse. In the castle a pious vassal met the knight, and said: 'Thank God, dear Sir, that you are come! There is certainly again something evil brewing above. But be you yourself upon your guard, and let not yourself be beguiled. Your father has a guest, and, as it seems to me, a hateful one.'

Sintram opened the doors shuddering.

A little man in a miner's garb was sitting with his back towards him; the harnesses had already a long time since been built up again around the stone table, so that they only left two places free; that

opposite to the door was occupied by Biorn Flame-eye, shone upon by the most glaring rays of the torches, and so flamingly red in his countenance and looks, that he was altogether suited to that fearful surname.

'Father, whom have you with you?' cried Sintram, and his guess became assurance, as the miner turned round, and the Little Master's loathsome face laughed forth from the dark hood.

'Aye, look you, Sir son,' said the wholly bewildered Biorn, 'thou hast not been with me this long time, and so this jovial companion has visited me this evening, and thy place is lost unto thee. But only throw one of the harnesses aside, and fetch thyself a seat in its room, and drink with us, and make merry with us.'

'Aye, do so, Sir knight Sintram!' laughed the Little Master. 'What else can come of it, than that the overthrown pieces of armour will rattle against one another somewhat strangely, and at the utmost the wandering ghost of him to whom the harness belonged will give you a look over your shoulder? But our wine he will not drink up; that ghosts are wont to let alone. To it therefore cheerily!'

Biorn joined in the loathsome stranger's laugh with mad vehemence, and while Sintram was collecting all his strength, in order not to be driven out of his senses by these wild speeches, and with still fixedness looked into the Little Master's face, the old man cried: 'Why starest thou at him thus? Seems it to thee perchance, as if thou wert looking into a mirror? Now that you are together, I no longer find it so much; but before it was unto me, as if you might have been taken for one another.'

'That God forefend!' said Sintram, stepped up nearer towards the fearful apparition, and spake: 'I

command thee, hateful stranger, that thou depart from this castle, on the strength of my power as son and heir, as a consecrated knight, and as a spirit.'

Biorn seemed resolved to set himself against this with all his fierceness; the Little Master muttered unto himself: 'Thou art not yet master of the house here, thou pious knight, thou hast never yet lit a fire here upon the hearth;'—then Sintram drew forth the sword which Gabrielle had bestowed upon him, held the cross at its hilt before the eyes of the evil guest, and said calmly, but with a voice of power: 'Worship, or fly!'

And he fled, the terrible stranger fled from thence with such lightning-like speed, that one scarce knew whether he had sprung through the window or out at the door. But he overthrew some of the harnesses in so doing, the torches went out, and in a blue and yellow light, which in an inconceivable manner illuminated the hall, it was, as if the Little Master's words were receiving their fulfilment, as if the ghosts, to whom the fallen harnesses had belonged, were leaning over the table grinning fearfully.

Both the father and the son were dismayed at heart, but each struck into the opposite way to safety. Biorn would have the hateful guest up again, and the effect of this was to be felt: his will was so mighty, that the Little Master's step already clattered anew upon the stairs, his brown and yellow, dry hand already fumbled at the lock of the door.

Sintram on the contrary kept ever saying to himself: 'We are lost, if he comes back! We are lost to all eternity, if he comes back!' and he sank upon his knees and prayed fervently from his anguished heart to Father, Saviour, and Holy Ghost; and then the Little Master was away from the door; and again

Biorn willed him back; and again Sintram prayed him away; thus the fearful spiritual wrestling continued throughout the long night; and howling whirlwinds raged meanwhile round about the castle; so that the whole household thought that the end of time was at hand.

A morning glimmer dawned at length upon the windows of the hall, the roar of the storm hushed, Biorn sank strengthlessly slumbering back upon his seat, hope and rest came into the spirits of all the dwellers in the castle, and Sintram went out before the gate pale and exhausted, to breathe the dewy air of the mild winter morning.

CHAPTER XXVI

The faithful Skovmaerke had followed his master caressing him, and lay now, while Sintram sat half asleep upon a stone bench in the wall, watchful and listening at his feet. On a sudden he pricked up his ears, looked pleased with bright eyes around, and sprang with merry leaps down the hill. Immediately after the chaplain of Drontheim came forth amidst the stones, while the good creature fawned upon him to greet him, and then ran back again to his knight, as if to announce unto him the wished-for tidings.

Sintram opened his eyes, like a child before whose bed the Christmas gifts have been placed. For the chaplain smiled upon him, as he had never smiled upon him before. There lay victory and bliss, or at least the joyous nearness of both in that smile.

'Thou didst much yesterday, very much!' said the pious priest, and his hands were folded, and his eyes were moistened. 'I bless God on thine account my

hero-knight. Verena knows all, and she also blesses God on thine account. Yea, I dare hope, that the time will now soon be at hand, when thou mayest appear before her. But Sintram, Sir Sintram, the urgency also is great. For the old man there above needs speedy help, and thou hast got a heavy—I hope the last—but yet a highly heavy trial to undergo in his behalf. Arm thyself, my hero, arm thyself also with bodily weapons. This time, indeed, there is only need of ghostly arms, but upon decisive moments the whole solemn garb of his order ever beseems the knight, as it does the monk. When all is right with thee, we will go forthwith together to Drontheim. Thou must return again this night. That too belongs to the hidden counsels, which dawn and reveal themselves in Verena's visions. Besides there is still ever so much here that is hostile and wild, and thou hast great need to-day of collecting thyself calmly.'

With joyful meekness Sintram bowed his assent, and called for his horse and for a suit of armour. 'Only,' added he, 'do not bring me any one of the harnesses, which since last night lie overthrown in the hall.'—Everything was speedily done according to his command.

The pieces of armour, which were brought forth, were beautifully adorned with graven work; the helmet alone was simple, as though shaped rather after the guise of a squire, than of a knight; the lance which belonged thereto was almost gigantically large;—and all these did the chaplain regard with deep thought and mournful emotion. At length, when Sintram with the assistance of the squires was now almost ready harnessed, the pious priest said:

'Wonderful appointment of God! Look you, dear

Sir, this armour and this spear were borne formerly by Sir Weigand the Slim, and he accomplished many great deeds therewith. Now when he was nursed by your mother in the castle, and your father also was yet quite mild towards him, he begged as a favour for himself, that he might hang up his harness and his lance in Biorn's armoury—he himself, as you well know, thought of building a cloister and of entering as a monk therein—and he added thereto his former squire's helmet instead of another, because he yet wore this, when he for the first time looked into the beautiful Verena's angel face. How comes it to pass now thus peculiarly, that these very arms, which have so long rested, are brought forth to you for the decisive hour! To me at least, so far as my short-sighted human eye can reach, to me it seems to be a very solemn sign indeed, but a glorious one and one full of high promise.'

Sintram stood meanwhile completely equipped quite majestically and in full splendour, and one might have almost taken him to be still a youth from his shape and address, only that his grief-ploughed countenance stared forth from his helmet with the marks of age.

'Who has stuck leaves upon my war-horse's head?' asked Sintram of the attendants with displeasure. 'I am no conqueror and no bridegroom. And what sort of leaves are there to be found now moreover, except these red and yellow rustling oak-leaves, gloomy and dead, as the season itself?'

'Sir, I know not myself;' replied a vassal; 'but it was unto me somehow, as if it could not be otherwise.'

'Let it be;' said the chaplain. 'It is unto me, as if this also came for a significant omen from the right source.'

Then the knight swung himself into his saddle, the priest walked by his side, and both journeyed slowly and silently towards Drontheim. The good hound ran after his master.

When they came in sight of Drontheim's high castle, a soft smile laid itself upon Sintram's face, like sunshine upon a wintry valley. 'God does great things with me;' said he. 'As a fearfully wild boy did I once spring away from hence; as a penitent man do I now return. I hope it will be well with this poor desolate life.'

The chaplain bowed his head in friendly assent, and the travellers soon after passed through the lofty, sounding, vaulted gate into the castle court. Upon the priest's signal attendants hastened reverently forward, and took the horse into their care; then he and Sintram paced along many tangled staircases and passages towards the remote little chamber, which the chaplain had chosen out for himself, far from the turmoil of men, nigh unto the clouds and the stars. Here a still day was passed by both in hearty, fervent prayer, and in diligent perusal of holy writings.

As the evening mounted up, the chaplain arose and said: 'Up, my knight, gird now thy horse, and seat thyself upon him, and ride again towards thy father's castle. Thou hast a wearisome path before thee, and I may not attend thee. But call upon the Lord for thee, that I may, and that I will, this whole fearful night through. O thou very dear vessel of the Most High, go not unto thy destruction!'

Shuddering from terrible forebodings, but yet strong and fresh in his spirit, Sintram did according to the holy man's behest. The sun was just sinking down, as the knight approached a long valley, singularly

shut in by rocks, through which his way led home to the family castle.

CHAPTER XXVII

When already nigh unto the pass between the cliffs, the knight looked back once again with thankfulness and prayer towards Drontheim castle. It lay so still and large and quiet there, the bright windows of the chaplain's lofty chamber sparkled yet in the last gleams of the already vanished sun; before Sintram there yawned the dark valley, like his grave.

Then came some one from the side of the road riding up to him on a little horse, and Skovmaerke, who had leapt inquiringly towards the strange form, ran back now with his tail between his legs and his ears sunken, howling and whining, and drew back in alarm beneath his master's war-horse.

But even this noble animal seemed to forget its otherwise so ardent battle spirit. It shuddered, and as the knight was driving it towards the stranger, it mounted rearing and champing on high, and began to walk backwards upon its hind hoofs. Only with difficulty was it at length subdued by Sintram's strength and horsemanship. He approached, his steed being quite white with foam, towards the unknown traveller.

'You have timid animals with you;' said the latter with a low suppressed voice.

Sintram could not, beneath the ever deeplier and deeplier blackening dusk, rightly distinguish what sort of a being exactly he had before him; only a very pale face—he thought at first it was covered with fresh-fallen snow—shone upon him from out of the conceal-

ing garments. It seemed that the stranger was bearing a little chest wrapped up beneath his arm, his nag sank, as though deadly weary, its head towards the ground, whereat a bell, that hung down under its neck from the ugly tattered reins, sounded strangely.

After some silence Sintram returned: 'Noble steeds are wont to be shy of such as are less noble, because they are ashamed of them, and the bravest dogs are overcome with a secret shuddering at unwonted forms. I have no timid animals with me.'

'Well, Sir knight; then ride with me into the valley.'

'Into the valley I am going, but I need no companions.'

'But I may perhaps need one. See you not that I am unarmed? And about this time, about this hour, there are loathsome witch-creatures here.'

Then, as it were, hideously to confirm the stranger's words, a thing swung itself down from the nearest hoar-frosted tree—one could not distinguish whether it was a snake or whether it was a lizard—which curled and riggled about, and seemed wishing to make at the knight or his companion. Sintram thrust with his lance at it, and pierced it through. But it sat fixed, making the most hideous contortions, above upon the spear-head, and in vain did the knight strive to brush it off against the rock or the branches. Then he sank his lance over his right shoulder behind him, so that he had the loathsome creature no longer before his eyes, and said with calm courage to the stranger:

'It does seem in truth, as if I could help you, and the company of an unknown person has not been exactly forbidden to me; so cheerily forwards, and into the valley.'

'Help!' thus sounded back the gloomy answer. 'Not

help—I perhaps may help thee. May God at least have mercy on thee, if I should ever at any time be no more able to help thee. Then wouldest thou be lost, and I should be very terrible unto thee. But we are going into the valley, and I have thy knightly word for so doing. Come!'

They rode forwards; Sintram's horse yet ever shying, the faithful hound yet ever whining, but both obeying the will of their master, the knight calm and firm.

The snow had fallen away from the smooth rocks, and by the light of the ascending moon one saw upon the stone walls many winding monsters, partly shaped with serpents' forms, partly with human faces. They were, however, only strange veins in the cliffs, and in the midst amongst them half-naked roots of trees that with obstinate stiffness had taken up their abode there. Drontheim Castle gazed in yet once more through a cleft in the rock, lofty and stranger-like, as it were to bid farewell.

Then the knight looked right sharply into his companion's eyes, and it almost seemed to him as if Weigand the Slim were riding beside him. 'In God's name,' he cried out, 'art thou perchance the shade of the departed hero, who suffered and died for Verena?'

'I suffered not, I died not; but ye suffer, and ye die, ye wretched race!' so murmured the stranger. 'I am not Weigand. I am the other One, who looked so like unto him, and whom thou also hast already of yore met in the forest.'

Sintram strove to tear himself away from the horror which overcame him at these words. He looked upon his horse; it seemed to him quite transformed. The dry, coloured oak-leaves rustled upon its head, like the

flames upon an altar, beneath the gliding of the moonbeams. He looked down towards his faithful Skovmaerke; he also was quite marvellously disfigured by his fear. Upon the ground there lay in the midst of the road dead men's bones, and hideous lizards crept along, and venomously glowing weeds were sprouting up in spite of the wintry season.

'Is then that still my horse, upon which I ride?' the knight lowly asked himself. 'And is that trembling animal, which runs beside me, my hound?'

Here some one cried out behind him with a yelling voice: 'Halt! Halt! take me also along with you!'—Sintram looking round beheld a loathsome little form, horned, half a boar, half a bear in face, striding upright upon horse's hoofs, with a marvellously hideous hooked or sickle-like weapon in its hand. It was the being, that had been wont to torture him in his dreams, and alas! it was also at the same time the noxious Little Master, and wildly laughing stretched forth a long claw towards the knight's hip.

Sintram murmured confounded: 'I have surely fallen asleep! and my dreams are now bursting forth!'

'Thou wakest,' returned the rider of the little horse, 'and me also dost thou know from thy dreams; for lo, I am Death.'

And his garments fell away from him, and a mouldering fleshless corpse came forth from them, and a half dead face with a diadem of serpents; what had stuck concealed beneath his mantle, was an hour-glass that had almost run out. This Death held up before the knight with his fleshless right arm. The bell upon the neck of the little horse sounded at the same time very solemnly. It was a death-bell.

'Lord into thy hands I commend my spirit!' prayed

Sintram, and rode full of calm resignation after the onward beckoning Death.

'He has not gotten thee yet! He has not gotten thee yet!' screamed the terrible monster behind him. 'Give thyself up rather unto me. In the twinkling of an eye—for swift are thy thoughts, swift is my might—in the twinkling of an eye thou standest in Normandy. Helen yet blooms ravishing, as when she departed hence, and thine shall she be this very night.'

And again he took up his godless praise-chaunt of Gabrielle's beauty, and Sintram's heart beat high in his weak bosom glowingly and wildly.

Death said no more, but he raised the hour-glass in his right hand higher and ever higher, and as the sand now ran away more rapidly, a gentle gleam from the glass laid itself upon Sintram's face, and then it was unto him, as if eternity in its still splendour were opening before him, and as if the confused world were plucking him backwards with hideous claws.

'I command thee, thou wild form, that thus followest me,' he cried out, 'I command thee in the name of my Lord Jesus Christ that thou desist from thy enticing prate, and that thou name thyself unto me with the word, wherewith thou art charactered in Holy Writ!'

A name more fearful than a thunder-clap roared in despair from the lips of the tempter, and he vanished.

'He will not come again;' said Death friendly.

'So then I am now become altogether thine, my solemn companion?'

'Not yet, my Sintram. Not till after many, many years shall I come unto thee. But thou must not forget me until then.'

'I will hold thee fast before my soul, thou fearfully healing warner, thou terribly loving guide.'

'Oh, I can also look very mild.'

And he proved it forthwith by the deed. His form began to melt away ever more and more softly before the growing glimmer that shone out of the hour-glass, his features but now so bitterly severe smiled tenderly, out of the crown of serpents there grew a sparkling palm-wreath, out of the horse a white vapoury moon-cloud, and the bell sang forth sweet lullabies invisibly therefrom. Sintram thought he distinguished these words in the sound:

> World and arch-foe fly before thee!
> Heavenly lights are hovering o'er thee!
> Hero who hast won this prize,
> Help the old man in his sorrow!
> For my hand this very morrow
> Fast will close his flaming eyes.

The knight well knew that his father was hereby meant, and urged on his noble horse at full speed. It obeyed him now easily and readily, and the faithful hound ran again busily and with confidence by his side; Death had disappeared, only something like a ruddy morning cloud hovered along before him, which remained visible even then, when the already uprisen sun clearly and brightly lit up the pure wintry sky.

CHAPTER XXVIII

'He is dead, he has died of the terrors of that dreadful stormy night!' so said about this time some men-at-arms of Sir Biorn, who since the morning of the former day had not yet come to his senses, and for whom they had prepared a couch of wolf's and bear's skins in the

great hall, amidst the scattered overthrown harnesses. One of the squires sighed softly: 'Oh God, have pity upon this poor wild soul!'—

Then the watchman blew from the tower, and a yeoman entered the chamber amazed.

'A knight is advancing hitherward,' said he, 'a marvellous knight. I should take him for Sir Sintram, but a bright, bright morning-cloud is hovering along ever close before him, and gleams upon him with such fresh light, that one might think pure red blossoms were falling down upon him. Besides his horse bears a reddish wreath of leaves on high upon his head, such as I have never been wont to see about the son of our dead Lord.'

'Just such a one,' returned another, 'did I weave for him yesterday. It pleased him not at first, but afterwards he let it be.'

'And why didst thou so?'

'It was, as if somebody kept singing and singing in my ear:

> The victory, the victory,
> The fairest, noblest victory,
> The knight he rides to the victory!—

And just then a branch of our oldest oak-tree was stretching along over my head, and had yet kept almost all its red and yellow leaves through the snow. So I did according to that which was sung unto me, and brushed some of them down, and wove a wreath of victory for the noble war-horse. And while I was so doing Skovmaerke jumped—ye know, the good creature had always a strange shyness of Sir Biorn, and had therefore gone with the horse into the stable—he jumped upon me fawning and so merrily, as if he would thank me for my work, and such

noble creatures have a good understanding of fair omens.'

The sound of Sintram's spurs and Skovmaerke's merry bark were heard advancing up the flagstone-steps.

Then up rose at once the supposed corpse of the old Biorn, looked with rolling eyes, widely torn open, round about him, and asked the terrified men-at-arms with a hollow voice:

'Who comes there, ye fellows? Who comes there? I know it is my son. But who comes with him?—The answer to that bears the sword of judgement in its mouth. Look ye, dear vassals, Gotthard and Rudlieb have prayed for me very much; but if the Little Master comes with him, then am I still lost!'

'Thou art not lost, dear father!' sounded Sintram's friendly voice through the gently opened door, and the ruddy glimmer of the morning cloud floated in together with him.

Biorn folded his hands, looked thankfully up to heaven, and said smiling: 'Yes, yes, blessed be God, it is the right companion! It is the beautiful, friendly Death!'

And he then beckoned his son towards him, saying: 'Come hither, thou my preserver, come thou blessed of the Lord, that I may relate unto thee what has been passing with me.'

As Sintram now seated himself close by the couch of his father, a remarkable change and contrast struck all who were in the chamber. For the old Biorn, at other times so glowing as well in his whole countenance as in his eyes, was now of a quite pale colour, almost like a white stone, while on the other hand the heretofore deadly pale Sintram lightened like a youth with

bright rosy cheeks. This was, because the morning-cloud yet ever poured its rays over him, the presence of which in the hall was rather to be felt than seen, but which nevertheless sparkled through every heart with a gentle tremor.

'Look, my son,' began the old man softly and affectionately, 'I have lain indeed very long in a death-slumber, and have known nothing of that which was going on without me, but inwardly, Oh inwardly, there have I known only all too much. I thought, my soul must perish from everlasting anguish, and yet I then again felt it as still much more fearful, that my soul was everlasting, like this anguish.—Dear child, thy cheeks but now so ruddy and like the dawn begin, nevertheless, to pale at my discourse. I refrain. But let me tell thee of something more beautiful. Far, far away I saw into a lofty bright church, and Gotthard Lenz and Rudlieb were kneeling there, and were praying for me. Gotthard was now already become very, very old, and looked almost like our mountains full of snow, but in the beautiful hours when they are shone upon by the evening sun. And Rudlieb too was already an old-growing man, but yet very fresh, and very strong, and they both freshly and strongly called unto God in behalf of me, their foe. Then I heard that a voice, like an angel's, said: 'The best is achieved by thy son. He must battle throughout this night with Death, and with him, who is fallen. His victory is victory, his overthrow is overthrow for the old man and for himself.'—Hereupon I awoke, and knew it now hung upon whom thou broughtest with thee. Thou hast conquered. O blessings next to God upon thee!'

'Gotthard Lenz and Rudlieb Lenz have also helped

much,' replied Sintram, 'ah, and also, dear father, the burning prayer of the chaplain of Drontheim. I well felt in my striving with temptation and horror, how the heavenly breath of pious men breathed upon me and strengthened me.'

'That will I gladly believe from thee, my glorious son, and all whatsoever thou sayest unto me;' returned the old man, and at the self-same instant also the chaplain entered, and Biorn smiling with joy and peace stretched forth his hands towards him.

Then was there amongst them all a beautiful embracing in unity and blessedness.—'Only look,' said the old Biorn, 'how the good Skovmaerke also jumps upon me now so fondly, and tries to caress me! It is no long time since he always howled anxiously, whenever he saw me.'

'Dear Sir,' said the chaplain, 'there lives even in that good little animal a spirit from God, though in truth only dreamily and unconsciously.'

It now became ever stiller and stiller in the hall. The last hour of the old knight approached, but he awaited it with a clear and cheerful mind. The chaplain and Sintram prayed by his couch. The men-at-arms knelt reverently around. At last the dying man asked: 'Is that Verena's prayer-bell in the cloister?' and Sintram nodded a friendly assent, but his heart's hot tears fell upon his father's deadly pale cheeks. Then there brake forth, as it were, a ray from the old man's eyes, and the morning cloud passed along close over him, and ray and morning cloud and life had vanished from the corpse.

CHAPTER XXIX

After a few days Sintram was standing in the presence-chamber of the convent, and with a beating heart awaited the appearance of his mother. The last time that he had seen her was, when he, a slumbering boy, had been awakened by her hot farewell kisses, in order immediately afterwards to fall back again asleep, musing dreamily what his mother could really mean, and to seek her on the following morning in the castle and garden in vain. At his side stood the chaplain, and had his joy in the melancholy rapture of the mild-grown hero, upon whose cheeks a gentle after-gleam of that solemn morning cloud had remained behind.

The inner doors opened. Tall and majestic and grey-haired, the lady Verena entered in her white veils smiling blessedly, and beckoned her son towards the grating. Here no thought could arise of any stormy outbreaking of grief or of pleasure. The holy peace, which breathed through these halls, would have sunken itself even into a heart less proved and purified, than Sintram now bore within his bosom. Silently weeping the son knelt down before his mother, kissed her garment that floated forward through the bars, and felt as it were in Paradise, where every wish and every tumult is hushed.

'Dear mother,' said he after a time, 'let me become a holy man, as thou art a holy woman! Then will I go into that cloister of monks on the other side yonder, and it may be that I shall in some after-time be found worthy to become thy confessor, when sickness and the weakness of age keep the pious chaplain at Drontheim castle.'

'That would be a beautiful, stilly joyful existence, my good child;' replied the lady Verena. 'Such, however, is not thy destiny. A brave, high, and mighty knight must thou remain, and employ the long life, which is wont almost always to be vouchsafed unto us children of the high north, in protecting the weak, in repressing the wanton, and yet, moreover, in another joyous and honourable task, which I at present rather reverence, than know.'

'God's will be done!' said the knight, and raised himself upright full of resignation and firmness.

'That is my good son;' returned the lady Verena. 'Ah, many beautiful still joys are blossoming up for us! Lo, already has our long yearning to see one another again been appeased, and thou shalt not henceforth moreover depart from me so utterly and altogether into the strange distance. Every week upon this day shalt thou return unto me, and inform me what glorious deeds thou hast achieved, and procure thyself my counsel and my blessing.'

'So I am then altogether become again just like a good, happy child!' cried Sintram merrily. 'Only that the dear God has given me yet over and above the strength of manhood in soul and body. Oh, what a blessed being is a son, unto whom it is vouchsafed to delight his dear mother with the garlands and fruits of his life!'

Thus he departed now cheerful and manywise blessed from the cloister's quiet embrace, and entered upon his noble career. Not only did he go forth upon every side, where right was to be aided or wrong to be warded off; to every stranger also did the now very friendly family castle evermore stand open for his protection and cheerful entreatment; and the old Rolf,

almost entirely restored to youth again by the pious glory of his knight, presided therein as castle steward. A fair, freshly active winter passed along over Sintram's life, and only at times did he sigh stilly unto himself: 'Oh Montfaucon, Oh Gabrielle, have you altogether forgotten me ere this, or no?'

CHAPTER XXX

The spring had already come brightly over the northern countries, when one morning, after a victoriously fought night-combat against the most fearful peace-breaker of these districts, Sintram turned his horse back towards the family castle. His men-at-arms followed him singing. As they drew nearer, a merry sound of horns pealed over to them from the fortress. 'There must be some dear visit come to us!' said the knight, and spurred his horse along at a swifter pace over the dew-bright meadow.

Already from afar was the old Rolf seen busied in preparing under the trees before the gate a table for the morning meal. From every battlement and tower banners and ensigns were waving merrily in the refreshing spring breeze, the servants were running to and fro in their holiday clothes. As soon as the pious Rolf was aware of his knight, he clapped his hands joyfully together over his grey head, and hastened into the castle. The wings of the gate soon after unfolded solemnly, and Rolf came forth to meet Sintram, who meanwhile had arrived, with tears of joy upon his eyelashes, and pointed at three noble forms that followed him.

Two tall men—the one venerably old, the other almost at the beginning of old age, and both singu-

larly like one another—were leading between them a marvellously beautiful youth in page-attire of heavenly blue satin richly adorned with golden leaf-work. Both the old men wore the black satin garb of German citizens, and heavy gold-chains with large glittering medals around their neck and breast.

Sintram had never yet seen his lofty guests, and nevertheless they seemed to him like old and familiar acquaintances. The venerably old man reminded him of his dying father's words concerning the snow-berg shone upon by the evening sun, and he recollected at the same time, he himself knew not how, his having once heard from Folko, that in the southern countries one of the highest peaks of this kind was called the mount of Saint Gotthard. Then he knew also at once that the old-growing, freshly strong man on the other side was named Rudlieb. But the youth in the midst of them both—ah, Sintram scarce ventured in his humility to hope, who it might be, however proudly and mildly his features called up within him two highly honoured forms.

Then the old Gotthard Lenz, the king of old men, stepped solemnly up towards him and said: 'This is the noble page Engeltram of Montfaucon, the only son of the great baron of Montfaucon, and his father and mother send him unto thee, Sir Sintram, well knowing of thy pious high and glorious knightliness, in order that thou mayest bring him up in all the honour and strength of the north country, and mayest make him a Christian hero, like unto thyself.'

Sintram swung himself from his horse. Then Engeltram of Montfaucon most gracefully held his stirrups, with friendly earnestness restraining the men-at-arms who were pressing forward in these words: 'I am the

noblest page of this high knight, and unto me belongs the nearest service about him.'

Sintram knelt in silent prayer down upon the grass, then he lifted up Folko's and Gabrielle's image on high in the face of the morning sun, and cried: 'With God's help, my Engeltram, shalt thou become like him, and thy course like his!'

But Rolf said weeping with joy: 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace!'—Gotthard Lenz and Rudlieb Lenz lay upon Sintram's heart; the chaplain of Drontheim, who has just now come over from Verena's convent and again brought a cheerful morning greeting to her strong son, spread his hands in blessing over all.

It may be that it will hereafter be vouchsafed unto your poet, to relate the noble deeds, which Engeltram of Montfaucon under Sintram's guidance, and afterwards upon many courses also by himself, accomplished, in the service of God and to the honour of women.[1]

POSTSCRIPT

QUESTIONS have occasionally arisen, whether a poet has taken the creations of his mind from those of his forerunners, or in what manner he may have been first excited thereto. Such questions appear to me also to be by no means without interest, and I think,

[1] This history, of which the promise is so beautiful, has not, I believe, hitherto been published; but the richness and fertility of Fouqué's genius is such that it is difficult to speak with certainty, as to what is or is not to be found among his numerous romances and poems.—TR.

where the author is able to give himself a clear account thereupon, he may, yea even in a certain degree ought to impart it to his readers. Hence the following narrative.

Some years since there lay among my birthday-presents a beautiful engraving of Albert Dürer: a harnessed knight with an oldish countenance is riding upon his high steed, attended by his dog, through a fearful valley, where fragments of rock and roots of trees distort themselves into loathsome forms, and poisonous weeds rankle along the ground. Evil vermin are creeping along through them. Beside him Death is riding upon a wasted pony; from behind the form of a devil stretches over its clawed arm towards him. Both horse and dog look strangely, as it were infected by the hideous objects that surround them; but the knight rides quietly along his way, and bears upon the tip of his lance a lizard that he has already speared. A castle with its rich, friendly battlements looks over from afar, whereat the desolateness of the valley penetrates yet deeper into the soul.[1]

The friend, who gave me the print, had added to it a letter with a request from me to explain to him the mysterious forms by a ballad. It was not vouchsafed

[1] Schoeber in *Dürer's Life*, p. 87, supposes concerning this 'very singular piece', that 'either some particular cause must have furnished Dürer with occasion thereto, or that he wished to represent thereby the usual nature of a soldier's life.' And Bartsch in his *Peintre Graveur*, vol. vii, p. 107, proposes the conjecture, that the knight represented upon this plate was Franz von Sickingen, the friend of Luther and of Ulrich von Hutten. In the catalogue of Dürer's engravings to be found in Bartsch, the above is No. 98. In Otley's catalogue it is 70.

unto me to do so in those days, nor for a long time after; but I bare the image continually round about with me, in peace and in war, until it has now spun itself out and shaped itself quite clearly before me, but instead of a ballad into a little romance, if the friendly reader will let it pass as such.

FOUQUÉ.

Dec. 5 ,1814.

ASLAUGA'S KNIGHT

CHAPTER I

In the Island of Funen, there lived, in old times, a noble gentleman, called Froda the Skalds'-friend; a title which had been given him, because he not only took delight in hospitably entertaining all famous and honourable singers in his fair castle, but also laboured, with great industry, in collecting any ancient songs, tales, or traditions, which might still be met with in Runic manuscripts, or otherwise. With this view, he had even made some voyages to Iceland, and, in the course of them, fought several bloody battles with the pirates; as indeed he was, in all points, a bold knightly hero, and vied with his great ancestors not only in the matter of poetry, but also of war. He was still a blooming young man; yet all the other nobles of the Islands were accustomed to combine in his counsels and follow his banner; nay, his fame had passed over sea, and was known in the neighbouring Empire of Germany. This also was what he wished; for it would have broken his heart, had he thought that of him no songs would be sung, and no tales told, in after days.

One fine autumn evening, this worthy lord was sitting before his castle, as he often did at that time of day, both that he might have a free view on all sides over land and sea; and also that he might invite any passing traveller to come in with him, and taste his hospitality. However, on the present occasion, he took little notice of the sights he was wont to look at; for an old book, in artful, beautifully painted characters, had just been sent over to him by a learned Icelander, and was now lying on his knee. It was the story of Aslauga, the fair daughter of Sigurd, who at first, concealing

her high birth, and in mean apparel, had herded goats for some poor peasants; then, in her gold veil of flowing tresses, had pleased King Ragnar Lodbrog, and at last, as his queenly spouse, had adorned the Danish throne till the end of her days.

The knight Froda felt within his mind as if the graceful Lady Aslauga were rising in life and bodily presence before him; so that his brave still heart, devoted indeed in knightly service to all women, but hitherto untouched with passion for any individual female, now flamed up in bright love for this fair daughter of Sigurd. 'What matters it,' thought he, 'that she has vanished from the earth long years ago? She still sees so bright and clear into this heart of mine; and what more would a knight desire? Therefore shall she henceforth, for ever and ever, be my gentle dame, and my helper in fight and song.' In this mood, he made some verses on his new mistress, which ran as follows:

They ride and they seek with toil and care,
  To find a heart's mistress passing fair;
Through tower and through town they ride and seek,
  To find a heart's mistress passing meek;
Where rivers are rolling and mountains rise,
  To find a heart's mistress passing wise:
Ah, Knights! ye may seek, and seek full long,
  'Tis I have found her in Realms of Song!
I've found her, this mistress, wise, fair, and meek;
  How hearts can adore, my sword shall speak:
And should I not see her while toiling Here,
  O, Yonder, her form is light and clear;
And dwells she not down in Earth, this love,
  Our spirits are one in lands Above.
Good night, thou old world!—Sweet love, 'tis past!
  Who seeketh in faith, will find at last.

'Much depends on fortune, too,' said a hollow voice,

hard by the knight; and, on looking round, he observed the form of a poor peasant woman, so closely shrouded up in grey-coloured wrappings, that he could not see the smallest portion of her face. She was looking over his shoulder into the book, and she said, with a deep sigh: 'I know this story well; and I myself fare no better than the lady it is written of.' Froda looked at her with amazement. 'Yes indeed, yes indeed,' continued she, with strange becks and nods: 'Sure, I am the descendant of the great Rolf, to whom the fairest castles, and forests, and fields, of this island belonged; thy castle, and thy lands, Froda, among others. And now we are sunk into poverty; and because I am not so fair as Aslauga, there is nothing can be done for me, and I am fain to hide my poor face altogether.' It seemed as if she wept warm tears under her covering. At this Froda was touched, and he begged of her, for Heaven's sake, to let him know how he might help her; he was a descendant, he said, of the great Northland heroes, and perhaps something more than they, a good Christian. 'I almost fancy,' murmured she beneath her veil, 'that thou art the same Froda whom they name the Good and the Skalds'-friend, and of whose mildness and greatness of mind they tell such strange stories. If it is so, I may still find help. Thou hast but to give me the half of thy fields and meadows; I should then be in something like a state to live as beseemeth the descendant of the great Rolf.'

Then Froda looked thoughtfully on the ground, both because she had asked so much, and because he was considering whether she could be in truth descended from the mighty Rolf. But after a short pause, the veiled woman said: 'I must be mistaken, then, it

seems; and thou art not that far-famed, gentle-hearted Froda. Would Froda have thought so long over such a trifle! But I will try the utmost. See, for the fair Aslauga's sake, of whom thou hast been reading, and wert just singing; for the sake of Sigurd's bright daughter, fulfil my petition.'

Then Froda started up with a glowing heart, and cried: 'Let it be as thou hast said!' and held out to her his knightly hand, in confirmation. But he could not grasp the fingers of the woman, though her dim shape continued standing close by him. At this, a secret shudder began to creep over his frame, while suddenly a light seemed to issue from the form; a golden light, which covered her as with a dazzling garment: and he felt in his mind as if Aslauga were standing before him, clothed in the waving veil of her gold hair, and looking on him with a kind smile. Transported and blinded, he sank on his knee. On again rising up, he saw nothing but an autumn cloud passing over the meadows, fringed in its outline with the last brightness of twilight, and then disappearing far off among the waves of the sea.

The knight knew not what to make of this occurrence. In deep reflection, he returned to his apartments; at one time thinking for certain that he had seen Aslauga herself; at another, that some goblin had risen before him with deceitful jugglerics, mocking, in spiteful wise, the service which he had vowed to the departed lady. But, thenceforth, whether he was passing over dale, and heath, and forest, or sailing on the sea billows, such like appearances frequently met him. Once he found a cithern lying in the wood, and scared off a wolf from it; and while the cithern of itself broke forth into sweet tones, a fair baby rose out of it, as of

old Aslauga herself had done, when found in a similar manner. At other times, he would see goats clambering among the cliffs by the shore, and a golden form as if herding them; then again a resplendent queen in a glittering bark would seem to glide past him, and salute him with smiles. And still, when he tried to get near aught of this, it was vapour, and cloud, and air. A poet might sing many songs of these things. So much, however, he gathered from it, that the fair dame, Aslauga, had accepted his service, and that he had in deed and in truth become her knight.

CHAPTER II

During these things, winter had come on, and again passed away. In northern countries, this young season of the year, to those who understand it and know how to love it, is always wont to bring along with it a crowd of most fair and expressive images; with which, if you speak of earthly enjoyment, many a man might content himself for his whole earthly life. But at this time, when the spring came glancing forth with its budding leaves and its streaming brooks, there came likewise from the German Empire a most flowery and sunshiny piece of tidings over to Funen.

On the rich banks of the Mayn, where he pours his flood through the blessed land of Franconia, there stood an almost royal fortress, the orphan heiress of which was a relative of the German Kaiser. She was called Hildegardis, and acknowledged far and wide for the fairest of virgins. Now, her Imperial uncle wished also that she should wed the boldest knight that could be found far and wide, and no other than the boldest. Accordingly, he followed the example of

many noble chiefs in such cases, and appointed a Tournament, in which the first prize should be the hand of the lovely Hildegardis, provided that the victor were not already married, or occupied in his heart with some other fair friend. For the lists were not to be shut against any knightly warrior of proper bearing and birth, that the contest of courage and strength to be displayed might be so much the richer. Of all this, Froda's German brethren wrote him full accounts, and he made ready for appearing at the festival.

Before all, he forged for himself a gallant suit of mail, as indeed, among the whole armourers of the North, a region famed on this account, he was the most expert. The helmet he worked of pure gold, and formed it in such a way that it looked on all parts like mere clustering locks, recalling to his mind the golden hair of Aslauga. Thus, also, he fashioned on the breastplate of his harness, which was coated with silver, a gold shape, in half-relief, representing Aslauga in her tressy veil; to make it clear to all at the commencement of the Tourney, that this knight, bearing on his breast the figure of a lady, was fighting not for the hand of the fair Hildegardis, but for the joy of battle and knightly honour.

Then he led his gay Danish horse from its stall, put it carefully on shipboard, and sailed over in safety.

CHAPTER III

In one of those fair boxwood thickets, which you often see in the kind lands of Germany, he once fell in with a young friendly knight, of delicate form; who having just, in the gayest manner, spread out his repast on the

green sward, under the shadow of pleasant boughs, invited the brave Northman to partake of it. As the two were here dining cheerfully together, they felt a kindness in their hearts towards one another; and rejoiced to observe, on rising, that their present destinations led them both the same road. Not that they had signified this in words; on the contrary, the young knight, whose name was Edwald, was of an extremely taciturn nature, so that he could sit for hours with a quiet smile on his face, and never once open his mouth. But in this quiet smile itself there came a pious and kindly grace to view; and then, when at times a simple but significant word escaped over his lips, it appeared as a gift deserving thanks. So likewise was it with the little songs, which he now and then chanted. They were almost as soon ended as begun; but in their short lines dwelt a deep graceful life, whether it shaped itself as a friendly sigh, or as a blessed smile. The noble Froda felt as if a younger brother had been riding at his hand, or even a tender blooming son.

In this way they continued several days together: it almost seemed as if their paths were marked out for them in inseparable union; and much as they rejoiced in this, they used to look at one another, at outsetting, or when cross-ways met, with an air of sadness, as if asking whether there would still appear no diversity in their direction. Nay, it seemed as if in Edwald's downcast eye a tear were gathering.

It happened once, that in their inn, they came upon a rude overbearing knight; of gigantic form and strong limbs, and foreign un-German speech and manners. He came, it appeared, from Bohemia. This knight looked over with a strange smile to Froda, who had again spread out the old book with Aslauga's History

before him, and was diligently reading it. 'Perhaps you are a clerical knight?' he inquired of him, and seemed ready furnished to commence a whole train of unseemly jests. But the negative reply came over Froda's lips in so grave and firm a tone, that the foreign knight on the instant stopped short; as you often see the smaller animals, when they have risked a little liberty with their king the Lion, shrink into peace at a single look from him. Into peace, however, this foreign knight did not shrink. On the other hand he now began to break jokes on Edwald, on his youth, his silence, and delicate form; all which the latter bore for some time with great patience; but at last when the stranger ventured a too injurious word, he rose up, girt on his sword, and said with a dainty bow: 'I thank you, sir, for your wish to give me opportunity of proving that I am no timid or unpractised follower of knighthood. For in this view alone can your behaviour be excused, which otherwise I should be obliged to call extremely uncivil. Would you please——?'

With this he stepped out before the door; the Bohemian followed him with a scornful smile; and Froda, much concerned for his young friend, whose honour was, however, far too precious in his eyes to allow a thought of in any way taking up the cause himself.

It soon appeared that the Northman's anxiety had been groundless. With equal vigour and address, young Edwald fell on his gigantic adversary: so that to look upon the matter, it was almost like those battles between knights and forest monsters, of which we read in old books. The issue, too, was of the same sort. As the Bohemian was collecting all his strength for a decisive stroke, Edwald darted in on him, and with the force of a wrestler cast him to the ground.

Then, however, he spared his conquered enemy; courteously helped him up again, and went to seek his horse. In a little, he and Froda left the inn; and their journey once more led them both the same way.

'From henceforth I am glad of this,' said Froda, pointing with a look of satisfaction to their common road. 'For I must own to thee, Edkin'—he was wont in pleasant confidence to call his young friend by this childlike name—'I must own to thee, when I thought hitherto, that perhaps thou wert journeying with me to the Tournament in honour of the fair Hildegardis, a certain care rose up over my heart. Thy true knightly spirit I well knew; but I dreaded lest the force in thy tender arms might not suffice it. At length I have come to know thee as a swordsman, that may long seek his match; and Heaven be thanked if our paths go on and on, one way; and welcome to me, by the first chance, to front me in the lists!'

But Edwald looked at him with a sad countenance, and said: 'What can my strength and skill avail me, when it is with thee I am to try them, and for the highest prize of life, which only one of us can gain? Ah! this heavy news, that thou also art proceeding to the fair Hildegardis' Tournament, I have long foreboded with sorrowful heart.'

'Edkin,' answered the smiling Froda, 'thou kind gentle child, dost thou not see, then, that I already wear the image of a mistress on my breast-plate? My battle is but for the honour of victory, not for thy fair Hildegardis.'

'*My* fair Hildegardis!' sighed Edwald. 'That she will never be in this world: or if she should—Ah, Froda! it would break thy heart. I know well, the Northland faith is deep-rooted like your rocks, and

hard to melt like their snowy tops; but let no son of man believe that he can look unpunished into the fair eyes of Hildegardis. Has not she, the proud, the over-proud maiden, so crazed my still, humble mind, that I have forgotten the chasm which is lying betwixt us, and am hastening after her, and would rather die than renounce the wild hope of gaining this eagle spirit for myself.'

'I will help thee, Edkin,' answered Froda, still smiling. 'Could I but know how this queenly mistress looks! She must resemble the Walkeurs of our heathen ancestors, I think, since so many gallant heroes yield before her.'

Edwald, with a serious air, took a picture from his breast-plate, and held it up to him. Fixed, and as if enchanted, Froda gazed upon it; his cheeks glowed, his eyes sparkled; the smile vanished from his face, as sunlight fades away from the meadows before the advancing blackness of the storm.

'Dost thou see now, my lordly comrade,' muttered Edwald, 'that for one, or perhaps for both of us, the joy of life is gone?'

'Not yet,' answered Froda, with a violent effort over his mind; but hide thy strange picture, and let us rest beneath this shade. The duel must have tired thee a little; and for me an unwonted weariness presses me down with leaden weight.'

They dismounted from their horses; and reclined themselves on the sward.

CHAPTER IV

The noble Froda had no purpose of sleeping; he wished without disturbance to begin a stout struggle

with himself, and try, if so might be, to drive from his mind the frightfully fair image of Hildegardis. But it was as if the foreign power had already grown a portion of his own life; and at last a restless dreamy sleep did in fact overshadow his exhausted senses. He fancied himself fighting among a crowd of knights, and Hildegardis was looking on with smiles from a gay balcony; and as he was about gaining the prize, he perceived Edwald moaning in his blood under the hoofs of the horses. Again it seemed to him that he was standing by the side of Hildegardis in a church, and about to be married to her; he knew well that it was not right; and the Yes, which he was to pronounce, he pressed back with resolute force into his heart; and in doing so his eyes were wetted with warm tears. Out of still wilder and more perplexed visions Edwald's voice at length awoke him. He sat up; and his young comrade was saying in a kind tone, directed towards a neighbouring bush: 'Come back, however, noble maid. I will surely help you if I can; I did not mean to scare you away; only you were not to interrupt my brother in his sleep.' A departing gleam of gold glittered through the twigs.

'For Heaven's sake, comrade,' cried Froda starting to his feet, 'whom art thou speaking to, whom didst thou see near me?'

'I know not rightly how it was, myself,' said Edwald. 'Thou hadst scarcely fallen asleep, when a figure came forward from the wood, wrapped up in deep dark coverings: at first I took her for a peasant woman. She sat down by thy head, and though I could see nothing of her face I observed that she was in grief, and even saw her weeping. I beckoned to her to remove, and not disturb thee; and was about to offer

her a piece of gold, supposing her distress arose from poverty. But suddenly my hand was as it were rendered powerless; and a terror passed through my heart, as if I had conceived such a thought against a queen. At the same time glittering gold locks here and there waved out from among her coverings, and the grove began almost to shine with the reflection of them. "Poor boy," said she then, "thou lovest in thy own breast, and canst figure how a high female soul must burn in keen sadness, when a hero that engaged to be ours, turns away his heart, and is drawn to lower hopes like a weak bondsman." Thereupon she rose, and disappeared with a sigh in that bush. I almost felt, Froda, as if she named thee.'

'Yes, she named me,' answered Froda; 'and she has not named me in vain. Aslauga! thy knight comes on; he rides into the lists, and for thee and thy renown alone. And in the meanwhile, Edkin, we will win thy proud bride for thee also.' With this, full of his old proud joyfulness, he again sprang on horseback; and whenever the magic of Hildegardis' beauty was about to mount up before him, to dazzle and perplex, he gave a smile and cried 'Aslauga!' and his inward sun again beamed forth serene and cloudless.

CHAPTER V

On a balcony in the stately Castle of the Mayn, Hildegardis was accustomed to enjoy the cool of the evening, looking over the rich sweet scene; and with still more pleasure over the gleam of arms, which might generally be seen at the same time on many distant roads, from knights journeying hither, with and without retinue, purposing for the high prize of

the Tournament to try their force and courage in it. She was in truth a very proud and high-minded maiden; and perhaps carried matters farther in this respect than even her glancing beauty and princely rank could altogether justify. Now, as she was once looking over the glittering roads with her usual smile, a young damsel of her train began this little song:

Ah were I but a little bird,
  To sing from tree to tree;
And telling no one e'er a word,
  Come out so frank and free
With all, O with all that dwelt in me!

Ah were I but a little flower,
  To bloom on grassy lea;
With my sweet perfumes every hour,
  Come out so frank and free
With all, O with all that dwelt in me!

Ah I am but an armèd Knight
  Bound over land and sea;
Must shut my heart in rest and fight;
  And laid in grave shall be
My all, O my all that dwells in me!

'Why do you sing this song, and even now?' said Hildegardis, striving to look very proud and scornful at it, yet a deep secret sadness was visibly enough flitting over her face. 'It came into my head I know not how,' replied the maid, 'as I looked up the road, where the soft Edwald with his dainty little songs first came to us; it was he that taught me this. But seems it not, my mistress, and you, good girls, as if Edwald were riding hither that way again this moment?'—'Dreams!' sneered Hildegardis; and yet for a long while could not lead away her eye from the knight,

till at last almost by violence she turned it on Froda, his companion, saying: 'Well, yes, that one is Edwald. But what have you to see in that meek humble boy? Here cast your eyes, my maidens, on that other lofty form, if you would see a proper man.' She was silent. Through her bosom went a sound as of prophesying, that now the conqueror of the Tournament was riding into the court; and for the first time in her life, in looking at the stately Northman, she felt a submissive, almost painful reverence for a human being.

At supper the two new-come knights were placed opposite the queenly Hildegardis. As Froda, after the fashion of the North, was sitting in full armour, the golden figure of Aslauga glittered from the silver cuirass full in the eyes of the proud lady. She smiled haughtily, as if she felt that it depended but on her will to drive the image of that fair one from the breast and the heart of the knight. But suddenly a clear golden gleam passed through the hall, so that Hildegardis cried: 'What keen lightning!' and covered her eyes with her hands. Froda, however, looked with joyful salutation at the bright splendour. Thereby Hildegardis' fear of him grew still deeper; though she thought within herself: 'This highest and most mysterious of men was before all others born for her alone.' Yet she could not help often looking, almost against her will, with emotion and warmth at the poor Edwald, who was sitting there so silent and kindly, as if he were smiling compassionately on his own sorrow and his own vain hope.

When the two knights were left alone in their apartment, Edwald still kept looking for a long time from the window into the fresh airy night. Then he sang to his cithern:

A Hero so true,
A Boy who loved
This hero proved,
They went through the world, these two.

The Hero did win
Him peace and joy;
This saw the Boy,
And had his delight therein.

But Froda took the cithern from his hands, and said: 'No, Edkin, I will teach thee another song. Listen:

The Hall it grows bright as at morning-tide,
The Maiden is come in beauty's pride:
She looks on the right, and then round the left;
No gallant is yet of hope bereft.
He there with the golden cloak will't be?
She glances aside: I think, not he.
Or he with the cunning talk and wise?
She 's turning from him her ear and eyes.
Belike 'tis the Prince with the pearls and gold?
Her look on that side is short and cold.
Then who, in the world, let us hear, I pray,
Who is't that the Maid at last will say?
All silent and sorrowing, sits apart
A dainty young Squire; he rules her heart.
They tell many tales to themselves, I wot;
That one, he shall win, and knows it not.

Edwald's heart was glowing within his breast. 'As God will,' said he, low to himself; 'but I think I should never understand how such a thing had come to pass.'

'As God will!' repeated Froda. The two friends embraced, and soon after fell cheerfully asleep.

CHAPTER VI

Some days after this, Froda was once sitting in a remote grove of the castle garden, reading in the ancient book about his fair mistress Aslauga. Now, it chanced that Hildegardis was passing that way at the time. She stopped thoughtfully, and said:

'How comes it, you strange compound of Knight and cunning Master, that you keep the rich treasures of your knowledge so much to yourself? I should think, you must have many fine stories ready in your mind; for instance, the one you have before you even now: for I see some bright dainty figures of fair virgins and noble heroes painted among the letters.'

'In sooth, it is the lordliest and loveliest story this, in the whole world,' answered Froda. 'But ye have no patience, and no seriousness, to listen to our old Northland tales.'

'Who told you that?' said Hildegardis, with a little pride, which she liked to assume towards Froda when she could; then seated herself on the stone bench opposite him, and gave order that 'he should forthwith read to her somewhat from the book'.

Froda began; and, in the very exertion with which he laboured to translate the old heroic Iceland speech into German, his heart and soul flamed up in more solemn fervour. When he raised his eyes now and then, he looked into Hildegardis' beaming countenance, as for joy and sympathy and admiration, it glanced still fairer and fairer; and thoughts went through his mind, as if she, after all, might be his appointed bride on earth, to whom Aslauga herself was conducting him.

Then suddenly the characters grew strangely perplexed before his eyes; it was as if the figures were

beginning to move, and he was forced to stop. But, as he was looking with strained sight into the book, to drive away this wondrous interruption, he heard a well-known, gently-solemn voice, saying: 'Make a little room, fair lady. The story which the knight is reading to you treats of me, and I like to hear it.'

Before the eyes of the gazing Froda sat his mistress Aslauga, in the pomp of her golden waving locks, on the bench beside Hildegardis. The maiden, with tears of fright in her eyes, sank back in a swoon. Aslauga threatened her knight, earnestly but kindly, with her fair right hand, and vanished.

'What have I done to you,' cried Hildegardis, recovering from her faint by his exertions, 'what have I done to you, wicked knight, that you call your Northern spectres to my side, and with your horrid magic frighten me to death?'

'Dame,' answered Froda, 'so help me God, I did not call this mysterious lady, who has just appeared to us. But her will I now know full well; and so I recommend you to God's keeping.'

With this, he walked thoughtfully out of the grove.

In affright, Hildegardis fled on the other side, from the sombre gloom of the leaves, and stepped forth on a fair open green, where Edwald, in the fine glow of twilight, was plucking flowers; and, with friendly smiles, he offered her a nosegay of narcissuses and sensitive violets.

CHAPTER VII

The day appointed for the tournament had now arrived; and a great Duke, commissioned as deputy by the Emperor, arranged all things in the lordliest

and most splendid fashion for the solemn festival. Large, and level, and beautifully shaped, lay the jousting-ground; strewed with the finest sand, that man and horse might have proper footing on it; and glancing forth almost like a pure field of snow in the middle of the green lea. Rich cloths of silk from Arabia, decorated in curious interlacings with Indian gold, hung many-coloured over the lists enclosing the space, and flowed down from the high scaffoldings erected for ladies and princely spectators. At the upper end under a canopy of golden arches, tastefully and boldly crossed and combined, was Hildegardis' station. Green garlands and wreaths waved gracefully between the glittering pillars, in the fine July air; and, with impatient eyes, the crowding multitude outside the lists looked up to this, expecting the sight of the fairest maiden in Germany; and only now and then drawn some other way by the stately entrance of men-at-arms, riding gallantly through the barriers. O! how many bright harnesses, and richly-embroidered cloaks of satin, and high-waving plumes, were to be seen there that day! The lordly host, saluting each other and speaking together, swayed this way and that, on the ground within the lists, like a flower-bed stirred by the breath of the air; but a bed where the stalks had grown to trees, and the yellow and white leaves had bloomed into gold and silver, and the dew-drops had hardened into pearls and diamonds. For whatever was beautiful and precious in the world, these noble gentlemen had tastefully and variedly expended on the glory of that day.

Many eyes were turned on Froda, who, without scarf, or plume, or cloak, with his silver-gleaming cuirass, and Aslauga's golden figure on it, and his well-

wrought helmet of golden locks, glittered from amid the crowd like polished brass. Others also there were, that found their enjoyment in looking at young Edwald, who wore a cloak of white satin, fringed with azure and silver, almost covering his whole armour; and a large plume of swan-white feathers, overflowing his whole helmet. To view him, he seemed decorated with almost feminine grace; and yet the rare force with which he managed his wild white steed, announced the victorious strength of this tender hero.

In strange contrast with these two, was a giant shape in armour, dressed in a cloak of black shining bear-skin, trimmed with fine fur, without any ornament of clear metal whatever; even his helmet was overlaid with black bearskin; and, instead of plumes, a mane of blood-red horse-hair streamed copiously down on all sides from it. Froda and Edwald knew the dark knight well; it was their uncivil guest in the inn; and he likewise seemed to recognize the two friends; for he whirled his horse abruptly round, pressed through the crowd of fighters, and, after speaking some time at the lists with an ugly, brass-coloured old woman, sprang over the enclosure with a wild leap, and, darting off like an arrow, vanished out of sight. The old woman nodded after him with a friendly gesture; the multitude laughed, as at a strange Carnival show; and Edwald and Froda had their own almost frightsome thoughts on the matter; which, however, they did not see meet to impart to each other.

The kettledrums rolled, the trumpets sounded: leaning on the old Duke's arm, Hildegardis, richly attired, more resplendent still in all the brightness of her own beauty, stepped forward, under the arching of the golden bower, and curtsied to the assembly. The

knights bowed their heads to the ground, and perhaps in every one of their hearts this thought might be beating: 'There is no man on earth that can merit so royal a bride.' While Froda bowed, it seemed to him the golden light of Aslauga's tresses glanced over his eye; and his heart was proud and gay, that his mistress held him worthy to be put in mind of her so often.

The tournament began. At first, the trial was with blunt swords and battle-axes; then man to man, with lances; and, finally, the whole host parted in two equal bodies, and commenced a universal fight, in which it stood with every one to use sword or spear, as he pleased.

Froda and Edwald had alike gained the prize over their rivals; as each, justly estimating his own and his friend's courageous force, had in some degree anticipated: and now the two were to decide, by a match at running with the lance, to whom the highest crown of victory belonged. Before commencing, they rode slowly into the middle of the course together, and settled where they were to take their places.

'Keep thy inspiring star firmly in thy eye,' smiled Froda. 'I, too, shall not want the like gracious help.'

Edwald looked round with astonishment to see the mistress whom his friend seemed to have in view, and the latter continued:

'I did wrong to conceal aught from thee; but after the jousting, thou shalt know all. For the present, heed not unnecessary thoughts, dear Edkin, and sit firm, firm in thy saddle; for I tell thee, I will run with all my force; seeing it is not my own honour only that is at stake, but the far higher honour of my lady.'

'In such wise I also purpose to do,' said Edwald,

kindly. They shook hands, and then rode to their places.

At the pealing of the trumpets, the friends, dashing forward quick as arrows, again met together. Their lances shivered into splinters; the horses staggered; the knights, unmoved in their stirrups, plucked them up, and rode back to their stations.

When the signal was given for another course, Edwald's white steed snorted, wild and affrighted; Froda's strong chestnut reared into the air. It was clear that the two noble animals both dreaded a second hard encounter; but the knights held them firm with bit and spur, and, at a new call of the trumpets, they again thundered forward, fierce and obedient. Edwald had with a deep glowing look, anew impressed his soul with the beauty of his mistress; at the moment of meeting, he cried aloud: 'Hildegardis!' and so hard did his lance strike his valiant adversary, that the latter sank back on the haunches of his horse, with difficulty kept his saddle, and scarcely continued stirrup-fast; while Edwald, without wavering, dashed by; lowered his spear in salutation as he passed Hildegardis' bower; and then, amid the loud huzzaing of the multitude, galloped to his place for the third course. Ah! Hildegardis herself had greeted him with blushes and kind looks, in her surprise; and he felt as if the intoxicating bliss of this victory were already won.

Won, however, it was not; for the noble Froda, glowing with warlike shame, was again taming his frighted horse, and chastizing it with sharp strokes of his spurs, for the share it had borne in this mischief. At the same time he said, in a low voice: 'Dear fair mistress, show thyself visibly to me; it concerns thy name's honour.'

To all other persons, it seemed as if a rosy golden summer cloud were flitting over the deep blue sky; but Froda looked into the heavenly face of his mistress; felt himself, as it were, fanned by her golden tresses; and 'Aslauga!' cried he, and the knights rushed together; and far from his horse flew Edwald, down upon the dusty course.

CHAPTER VIII

FRODA, in knightly fashion, first for a space continued in motionless stillness; as if waiting to see whether any one yet thought of contesting him the victory; and, on his mailed horse, he looked almost like a lofty statue of metal. All around, the people stood silent in abashed astonishment; and as they did break out in the cry of triumph, he beckoned solemnly with his hand, and all were again dumb. Then, with a light bound, he was out of his saddle, and hastened to the place where the fallen Edwald was rising. He pressed him closely to his heart; led his white steed to him, and insisted on holding the stirrup as he mounted. Then he himself again sprang on horseback also, and rode by the side of Edwald to Hildegardis' gold bower; where, with lowered spear and lifted visor, he thus spoke:

'Fairest of all living women, I bring you here Edwald, your knightly bridegroom, before whose lance and sword all the heroes of this tournament have yielded, I excepted, to whom the lordly jewel of the victory can nowise belong; seeing, as the figure on my cuirass shows, I already serve another mistress.'

The Duke was on the point of stepping forward to the two knights, to conduct them to the bower; but a

sign from Hildegardis restrained him; and she said, with angry, agitated looks:

'Then it seems, my Danish Knight, Sir Froda, you serve your lady ill; for, even now, you have openly called me the fairest of living women.'

'This I did,' answered Froda, with a courteous bow, 'because my fair mistress belongs to the dead.'

A slight horror breathed through the multitude at these words, and through Hildegardis' heart; but soon the anger of the virgin again flamed up, and the more as the lordliest and most wondrous knight whom she knew despised her for the sake of one dead.

'I make known to all,' cried she, with solemn earnestness, ' that by the just will of my Imperial uncle, this hand can belong to no vanquished man, how noble and renowned soever he may otherwise have appeared. And as the conqueror in this tournament is bound by service elsewhere, this battle must for me be accounted no battle, and I go hence as I came, a free unaffianced maid.'

The Duke seemed desirous of remonstrating; but she turned proudly from him, and left the bower. At this instant, a sharp unexpected gust of air laid hold of the green garlands and wreaths, and threw their ravelled and rustling festoons after her; wherein the people, dissatisfied with her haughtiness, thought they saw a threatening omen; and so, with murmurs of derisive approval, they dispersed.

CHAPTER IX

THE two knights had returned, in deep silence, to their apartments. Arrived there, Edwald had himself disharnessed: he placed all the pieces of his fair bright

armour carefully together, with a kind exactness, almost as if he were burying a beloved friend that was dead. Then he beckoned his squires to leave the chamber, took his lute in his arm, and sang this little song to its notes:

> Who 's this thou art laying
> In grave so still?
> My wild, my unstaying,
> And froward will.
> Sleep soundly, thou will, in thy narrow bed!
> My hope sleeps with thee, 'tis cold and dead.

'Thou wilt make me hate thy lute,' said Froda: 'do now, accustom it to merrier touches. It is far too good for a passing-bell, and thou, in sooth, for such a bell-man. I tell thee, my young hero, it will all be right, and as it should be.'

Edwald looked in his face with astonishment for a while, then answered kindly: 'No, dear Froda, if it offends thee, I will surely not sing again.' However, he struck a few tones from the lute, which sounded infinitely tender and loving. Then the Northman, much moved, caught him in his arms, and said: 'Dear Edkin, sing, and speak, and do whatever pleases thee; to me it will always be delightful. But thou mayest believe it well, when I say to thee, with no unaided knowledge, that thy sorrow must end; whether to death or life I yet see not, but great surpassing joy does await thee, for certain.' Firm and cheerful Edwald rose from his seat, grasped his companion's arm, and stepped out with him, through blooming shrubberies, into the airy coolness of twilight.

At this same hour, an old woman, disguised in much superfluous apparel, was proceeding, under secret guidance, to the fair Hildegardis' chamber. The

woman was swarthy, and singular to look upon; by many feats of art, she had collected about her a part of the multitude returning from the tournament, and, in the end, had scared them all asunder in wild horror. Before this last occurrence, Hildegardis' girdle-maid had hastened to her mistress, to entertain her with the strange, merry, conjuring tricks of the old brass-coloured woman; and the ladies of the suite, striving to banish the chagrin of their disconsolate Princess, bade the messenger call in the crone. Hildegardis assented, hoping thereby to divert the attention of her maidens from herself; and so be permitted, with more deep and earnest attention, to watch the varying forms that were flitting in confusion through her mind.

Hildegardis' maid found the place already empty and the old brass-coloured stranger standing in the middle of it, laughing immoderately. Being questioned, the woman did not hesitate to tell how she had, in a twinkling, disguised herself in the shape of a huge owl, and in screeching words, informed the spectators that she was the Devil, whereupon every one of them had with loud shrieks run off for home.

The maid felt frightened at the thought of such hateful jesting; yet she durst not go back to ask new orders from her mistress, having already noticed the bad humour she was in. Therefore she satisfied herself with enjoining on the old woman, under many promises and threats, the strictest charges to behave herself with proper discreetness and good-manners in the castle; and then led her in by the most secret paths, that none of those she had just frighted might notice her.

The crone now appeared before Hildegardis; and, in the midst of a deep humble courtesy, nodded to her,

in a strange confidential wise, as if the two had been concerned in some mutual secret. The Princess involuntarily shrunk together at this movement; yet, hideous as the old woman's face appeared to her, she could not for a moment turn away her eyes from it. To the rest, the expectations they had placed on the old woman seemed by no means repaid: in truth, she played nothing but the most ordinary tricks, and told stories, known to every one; so that even the girdle-maid grew wearied and indifferent, and felt no little shame at having recommended her. She accordingly soon glided out unobserved, and several of the maidens followed her example; and still, as any one of them withdrew, the old crone twisted her mouth into a smile, and repeated that hatefully confidential nod. Hildegardis could not understand what attraction it was that she felt to the jests and stories of this brass-coloured woman; but so it was, in her whole life she had never listened to any one with such attention. The crone went on narrating and narrating, and the night was already looking dark through the windows; but the maidens who were still with Hildegardis had all sunk into deep sleep, and forgotten to light tapers in the chamber.

Then, in the sombre hour of dusk, this swart old woman rose from the stool where she had hitherto been sitting, and just as if she now felt at her ease and at home, stepped forward to Hildegardis, who was stupified with horror; sat down beside her on her purple couch, clasped her with odious caresses in her long withered arms, and whispered some words in her ear. The Princess felt as if someone were pronouncing Froda's and Edwald's name, both at once, and the sound of them seemed to change into a melody of

flutes; which, clear and silvery as its warblings were, nevertheless lulled her as into a sleep: she could move her limbs indeed, but only to follow the music, which wove, as it were, a veil of silver network around the hideous form of the crone. And the latter walked from the chambers, and Hildegardis after her, through her sleeping maidens, singing all the way in a low small voice: 'Ye maidens, ye maidens, I wander at night.'

Outside the castle was the giant Bohemian, in his bearskin cloak, waiting with squire and groom, all ready mounted. He laid a heavy bag of money on the crone's shoulders, so that she sank, half-whimpering, half-laughing, to the ground; then he lifted the dreaming Hildegardis on his horse, and galloped off with her in silence, into the deepening gloom of the night.

CHAPTER X

'Ye bold lords and knights, who yesterday contended in honour for the prize of your arms, the fair Hildegardis' hand! Arise! Arise! Saddle your steeds, and away! The fair Hildegardis is stolen!'

So, next morning, in the clear redness of dawn, were many heralds crying through castle and town; and on every side were knights and noble squires dashing forth in clouds of dust, by all roads, along which, lately in the fair twilight, Hildegardis had, in silent pride, seen her many suitors advancing.

Two, whom you well knew, proceeded in inseparable companionship on this occasion, as before; but whether they were on the right track or not, they knew as little as the rest; for how, and when, the adored mistress

could have vanished from her chambers, was still to the whole Court a frightful inexplicable riddle.

Edwald and Froda had travelled on so long as the sun moved over their heads, unresting as he; and now, when he was sinking in the waves of the river, they thought to gain the race of him, and again spurred their wearied horses; but the noble animals staggered and moaned, and there was nothing for it but to let them feed a little on the grassy sward. Certain of bringing them again at the first call, the knights freed them of curb and snaffle, and sent them off to graze at freedom, and drink in the blue fresh Mayn; they themselves, in the meanwhile, resting under the boughs of a neighbouring alder-tree.

And, deep in the cool dark shades, rose a gleam as of a mild, but clear-glittering light, and checked Froda's utterance, who was, even now, preparing to acquaint his friend of his plighted service to the fair Aslauga; having hitherto been hindered from it, first by Edwald's sadness, and then by his impatience in travelling. Ah! this soft lovely gold light was well known to Froda. 'Let us follow it Edkin,' said he, in a low voice; 'and let the horses, in the meanwhile, rest and graze.' Edwald, without answering, did as his companion advised. An inward voice, half-sweet, half-fearful, seemed to tell him that here was the path to Hildegardis, and the sole path that led to her. Once only he said, with a tone of surprise: 'I never saw the twilight glance so beautifully on the leaves as it is doing now.' Froda shook his head and smiled, and they pursued in silence their secret track.

On issuing from the other side of the alder-wood, at the shore of the Mayn, which almost encircled it by a sweeping turn, Edwald saw well that some other

brightness than that of twilight was shining on them; for the night already hung in cloudy darkness in the sky, and their guiding beam stopped at the strand of the river. The waves were sufficiently enlightened by it, to expose to view a little woody island in the middle of the stream, and a boat on this side fastened to a stake. But on approaching the spot, the knights descried new objects: a troop of horsemen, of strange foreign shape, all in deep slumber; and, reclining on cushions in the midst of them, a sleeping female dressed in white.

'Hildegardis!' smiled Edwald to himself, in scarcely audible tones; at the same time he drew his sword, making ready for battle, if so were, the robbers might awaken; and beckoned to Froda to lift the sleeping lady, and bring her to a place of safety. But at that instant, something in the figure of an owl passed whirring over the black squadron; and, with a sudden rattling clang, they all started up, and flew with hideous howling to arms. A tumultuous unequal battle rose in the darkness, for the friendly gleam had vanished. Froda and Edwald were parted in the press, and could only hear each other's stout war-cry from a far distance. Hildegardis, roused from her enchanted sleep, not knowing whether she was dreaming or awake, fled with bewildered senses, and bitterly weeping, into the deepest shades of the alders.

CHAPTER XI

Froda felt his arm growing weary, and the warm blood running down from two wounds in his shoulder. Therefore he determined so to die, that he might mount up with honour from his bloody grave, to the

high mistress whom he served; and throwing his shield backwards, he grasped the handle of his sword with both hands, and rushed with a loud war-shout on the terrified enemy. Immediately he heard some voices crying 'It is the Northland fury that is coming on him! The battle-madness!' And the host, in affright, darted asunder, and the wearied hero remained in his wounds alone in the darkness.

Then once more Aslauga's gold hair gleamed in the shades of the wood; and Froda, exhausted and leaning on his sword, looked towards it, and said: 'I think not that I am yet wounded to death; but when it does come to this, then, O beloved mistress! then, of a surety, thou wilt likewise appear to me in all thy loveliness and splendour?' A low 'Yes' came breathing over his cheeks, and the gold light vanished.

But now Hildegardis, almost fainting, staggered forth from the thickets, and said, with a feeble voice: 'Within is the frightfully fair Northland spectre, and without is the battle! O good God! whither shall I turn?'

Then Froda went towards her with soothing gestures, was about to say many comforting words to her, and to ask concerning Edwald, when suddenly the sound of armour, and wild shouts, gave notice that the Bohemian robbers were returning to the charge. Froda hastily conducted the maiden to the boat; pushed it off from the shore; and rowed with the last effort of his strength to reach the woody island, which he had before seen in the middle of the river. But the robbers had lit torches; they waved them sparkling this way and that; and by their light discovered the boat, as well as that their dreaded Danish enemy was wounded; and from this, new courage rose in their

plundering hearts. Froda, before he reached the island, had heard a Bohemian on the other side coming down with a fresh skiff, then a crowd of the foe getting into it, and beginning to pull after him.

'To the wood, fair virgin!' whispered he, so soon as he had helped Hildegardis ashore. 'Hide yourself there, while I try to keep the robbers from landing.'

But Hildegardis clung fast to his arm, and whispered in reply: 'Did I not see you stained in your blood, and pale? And would you that I die of terror in the solitary clefts of this dark hill? Ah! and if your Northland gold-haired lady-spirit were to come again, and sit down by me—Or think you, I do not see how she shines there through the bushes even now?'

'She shines!' repeated Froda; and new force and hope ran through his veins. He mounted the ascent, following the kind gleam; and though Hildegardis trembled at it, she willingly accompanied her guide; only now and then whispering, in an anxious voice: 'Ah, knight! my high, wondrous knight! do not leave me alone here! It would be my death!' Soothing her with friendly encouragements, he walked on faster and faster, through the hollows and darkness of the wood: for he already heard the sound of the robbers landing on the shore of the island.

Suddenly he found himself at the mouth of a cave, thickly covered with bushes; and the gleam vanished. 'Here, then!' whispered he, endeavouring to hold the branches asunder, that Hildegardis might enter more easily. She paused for a moment, and said:

'If you were to let go the branches again behind me, and I were to be left alone with spectres in the cave!—Oh Heaven!—But, Froda, no doubt you will follow me, poor, frightened, hunted creature, will you not!'

In this confidence she stepped through the boughs; and Froda, who could have wished to remain as sentry, followed her. With strained ear he hearkened through the stillness of the night; Hildegardis durst scarcely draw her breath. The clanging of an armed footstep approached; nearer and nearer, close by the mouth of the cave; and Froda endeavoured in vain to get loose of the trembling maiden. The branches at the entrance were crashing and breaking; Froda sighed heavily: 'So I must fall here, like a lurking fugitive, with women's veils floating round me! O God! it is a sorry end! But can I cast away from me this half-fainting form, and let her sink upon the dark, hard ground? Perhaps down into an abyss? Well, be then what must be! Thou, Aslauga, my mistress, knowest that I die in honour!'

'Froda! Hildegardis!' said a soft, well-known voice, at the entrance of the cavern; and, recognizing Edwald, Froda, with glad readiness, carried out the Princess into the star-light: 'She is dying in our hands for terror,' said he, 'in this black chasm. Are the enemy near?'

'Most part of them are lying dead on the shore, or floating in their blood among the waves. Lay aside anxiety, and rest yourselves. Art thou wounded, dear Froda?'

In answer to the questions of his astonished friends, he then briefly related, how, passing in the dark for a Bohemian knight, he had stepped into the skiff with the rest; after which, on landing, he had found no difficulty in entirely confounding the robbers; who, seeing themselves attacked from the middle of their own troop, had imagined that they were bewitched. 'At last,' thus he ended his narrative, 'they set to

cutting down each other; and now we have only to wait for morning, to begin our journey home with the Princess. For what of the owl-squadron still flits about, will of itself hide in daylight.'

While relating these things, he had been preparing, with great care and daintiness, a bed of twigs and moss for Hildegardis; and the wearied lady having, with some gentle words of thanks, soon fallen asleep, he began to dress his friend's wounds, as well as the darkness would permit.

During this earnest occupation, under the moaning of the high dark trees, with the voice of the river-waves murmuring from a distance, Froda, in a low voice, informed his knightly brother what mistress it was that he served. Edwald listened in deep thought, but at last said:

'Believe me, however, the lofty Princess Aslauga will not be wroth with thee, though thou bind thyself in true love with this earthly fair one. Ah! surely even now thou art shining in the dreams of Hildegardis, thou richly-gifted happy hero! I will not stand in thy way with my foolish wishes: it is clear enough that she can never, never love me. Therefore this very day will I set forth to join the war, which so many bold German knights are waging in the heathen land of Prussia; and the black cross which makes them priestly warriors, I will lay, as the surest remedy, on my beating heart. And do thou, dear Froda, take the fair hand which thou hast won in knightly battle, and lead a life of happiness and satisfaction without example.'

'Edwald,' said Froda, in a serious tone, 'this is the first time I ever heard a word from thy mouth, which an honest follower of knighthood could not turn to

action. Do thou towards the fair haughty Hildegardis according to thy pleasure; but Aslauga remains my mistress, and no other will I serve in life or death.'

At this rigorous answer the youth felt as it were rebuked, and was silent; and the two, without further speech, sat watching throughout the night in their own solemn contemplations.

CHAPTER XII

NEXT morning, scarcely had the sun, bright and smiling, scattered his first radiance over the flowery plains round Hildegardis' castle, when the watchman blew a merry air on his silver horn; for, with his falcon eyes, he had already from a far distance recognized the Princess, as she came riding along between her two deliverers. And from castle, and town, and hamlet, gay crowds issued forth, hastening to witness the glad arrival.

Hildegardis turned on Edwald her eyes, shining through tears, and said: 'Had it not been for you, young hero, all these kind people might have sought long and vainly before finding me in my distress, and before tracing out the noble Froda, who doubtless must now have been lying dumb and cold, a bloody, mangled corpse, in the dark cleft of the rocks.'

Edwald bowed humbly, but persisted in his usual silence; nay, it seemed as if some unwonted sorrow repressed even the friendly smile, which formerly, in sweet gentleness, came over his face so readily, at any word of kindness.

The Duke, Hildegardis' guardian, had, in the great joy of his heart, prepared a sumptuous morning repast,

and invited to it all the dames and knights who were still there. Now, as Froda and Edwald were ascending the stair, in shining pomp, close after Hildegardis, the youth said in a half whisper to his friend:

'Thou canst indeed never more love me, thou noble, steadfast hero?' and as Froda looked at him with astonishment, he proceeded: 'This it is when boys take it into their heads to counsel heroes, however well intended it may be. For now I have sinned heavily against thee, and against thy high mistress Aslauga still more.'

'Because thou would'st have plucked away every flower in the garden of thy life, to give me pleasure?' said Froda. 'No; thou continuest my gentle brother in knighthood now as before, dear Edkin; perhaps thou art grown still dearer to me.'

Then Edwald again smiled in still gladness, like a flower after the morning rain in May.

The eyes of Hildegardis glanced on him, mild and kindly; she often spoke with him also, in benignant words and tones; while, on the other hand, since yesternight, a reverent fear seemed to withdraw her from Froda. But Edwald, too, was much altered. With whatever humble joy he accepted the condescending favour of his mistress, it still seemed as if there stood something between the two, which forbade him every, even the most distant, hope of happiness in love.

Now, it chanced that a noble Count, from the Emperor's Court, was announced; who, being then bound on a weighty mission, wished to pay his reverence to the Princess in passing. She received him joyfully; and, directly after the first salutations, looking at her and Edwald, he said: 'I know not if my good fortune

has guided me to a most pleasant festival? It would be glad news for the Emperor my master.'

Hildegardis and Edwald looked very lovely in their embarrassed blushing; and the Count, observing that he had been too hasty, bowed humbly to the young knight, and said: 'Pardon me, noble Duke Edwald, my forward way; but I know the wish of my Sovereign, and the hope that this might be already fulfilled made my tongue forget itself.'

The eyes of all present fixed inquiringly upon the young hero, who, with graceful embarrassment, thus spoke: 'It is true, the Emperor, during my last attendance in his Imperial camp, had the excessive graciousness to make me a Duke. My good fortune so ordered it, that in one of our actions, some horsemen of the enemy, who had dared to attack the sacred person of our Sovereign, fled away just as I arrived at the spot.'

The Count, at Hildegardis' request, circumstantially related this heroic achievement; and it came to light, that Edwald had not only saved the Emperor from the most imminent danger; but likewise, shortly afterwards arrranged, and, in the cool daring spirit of a general, victoriously fought, the main battle which decided the war.

Astonishment at first held every one mute; and before the congratulations could begin, Hildegardis turned to Edwald, and said, in a low voice, which, however, in the silence, was heard by all: 'The noble Count has expressed the wish of my Imperial uncle; and I now conceal it no longer, my heart's wish is the same. I am Duke Edwald's bride.'

With this, she held out to him her fair right hand; and all present waited only for his taking it, to break forth in loud approval. But Edwald did not do as they

expected; on the contrary, he sank on his knee before the Princess, saying: 'God forbid that the lofty Hildegardis should ever recall a word which she has solemnly spoken before dames and knights. To no vanquished man, you said, could the hand of the Emperor's niece belong; and there stands the noble Danish knight Froda, my conqueror.'

Hildegardis turned hastily away with a slight blush and hid her eyes; and while Edwald rose, it seemed as if a tear ran over his cheek.

Clanging in his armour, Froda stepped into the middle of the hall, and exclaimed: 'I declare my late victory over Duke Edwald to be pure accident, and again challenge the knightly hero into the lists to-morrow.' And so saying, he threw down his iron gauntlet, and it rung on the floor.

But Edwald did not rise to lift it. On the contrary, a deep blush of anger glowed on his cheeks, his eyes glanced indignantly, so that you would scarcely have recognized him for the same person; and after a pause, he said: 'Noble knight, Sir Froda, if I erred towards you, we are now even. How could you, a hero gloriously wounded of two sword-cuts, challenge a healthy man to-morrow into the lists, if you did not despise him?'

'Pardon me, Duke,' answered Froda, somewhat put to shame, but in all cheerfulness; 'I spoke too fast. Not till my complete cure do I challenge you.'

Then Edwald joyfully lifted the gauntlet; again knelt down before Hildegardis, who, turning away her face, held him out her fair right hand to kiss; and then, arm in arm with his high Danish friend, he walked out of the hall.

CHAPTER XIII

While Froda's cure was proceeding, Edwald, impatient till it were completed, went out now and then, while the evening was darkening down deep and silent over him, and walked on the flowery terrace under Hildegardis' window, singing graceful little dainty songs, which the maidens of the Princess learned from him, and often repeated.

About this time it happened, that one night when the two friends were together, a man who occupied the post of Writer to the old Duke, Hildegardis' guardian, and who reckoned himself a very knowing person, paid them a visit; for the purpose, as he said, of making them a humble proposal.

The short account of the business was this: that as it was impossible for Froda to do any good with victory, he should take his opportunity, in the approaching tournament, and quietly fall from his horse; in which wise, he might with certainty secure to his companion the hand of the bride, and at the same time gratify the Imperial will, a thing that could not but turn to good profit for himself in many senses.

At this the two friends in the first place laughed very heartily together; then Froda stepped up to the Writer, and said, with great seriousness: 'Thee, little mannikin, the old Duke, if he knew thy foolish talk, would, in all likelihood, pack out of his service, not once to mention the Imperial will. But there is a proverb you must get by heart:

When knight with knight hath rode to the lists,
  The time is gone for talking of jests;
When knight on knight in the course must dash,
  No king nor kaiser can stay the clash;

And who pokes his nose in their knightly fray,
He has wish'd his nose from that hour good-day.

'And so your servant, worthy sir! And assure yourself that Edwald and I will run at one another in truth of heart, with all the force that is in us.'

The Writer vanished from the chamber in no small haste; and it is said that even next morning he looked exceedingly pale.

CHAPTER XIV

Soon after this, Froda had recovered; the course was again made ready as before, only that it was encircled by even a greater multitude of people; and, in the freshness of the clear dewy morning, the two heroes rode out solemnly together to the battle.

'Good Edwald,' said Froda, in a low voice by the way, 'prepare thyself beforehand; for this time, too, the victory will not be thine. On that red shining cloud stands Aslauga.'

'May be,' replied Edwald, with a still smile; 'but, under the wreaths of her gold bower, Hildegardis is already beaming, and to-day is even there before us.'

The knights took their places; the trumpets called, the course began; and truly Froda's prediction seemed about to be fulfilled; for as they rushed together, Edwald tottered in his seat, so that he let go the bridle, caught the mane with both hands, and not without great labour recovered his position; whilst his wild white horse scoured over the ground with ungovernable springs. Hildegardis also seemed to waver at this sight, but the youth at last tamed his steed, and the second course began.

Froda shot along the ground like a thunderbolt: all thought that the Duke's victory was utterly hopeless. But just at the instant of meeting, the bold Danish horse reared on end as if frightened; the rider swayed, his spear went by without hitting, and under Edwald's firm charge, both steed and knight rushed clanging to the ground, and lay there as if stupified.

Edwald now did as Froda had done a short time before. In knightly wise, he continued for a space motionless on the spot, as if waiting whether any other adversary would dispute the victory with him: then he sprang from his horse, and flew to the help of his prostrated friend.

Eagerly he laboured to draw him from beneath his horse; and, ere long, Froda regained his senses, extricated himself, and also plucked up his steed. Then he raised his visor, and smiled on his conqueror with a face of warm friendliness, though it was somewhat pale. The latter bowed humbly, almost bashfully, and said: 'Thou, my hero, thrown! And by me! I understand it not.'

'She herself wished it,' answered Froda, smiling. 'But come now to thy lofty bride.'

In loud triumph shouted the people, low bowed the knights and ladies, as the old Duke now advanced with the lovely pair, and at his bidding, under the wreaths of the gold bower, they fell into each other's arms with soft blushing.

That same day they were solemnly wedded in the chapel of the castle, seeing Froda had so wished it. A far journey, he said, into another country, was at hand for him; and he could wish so much to be present at the nuptials of his friend before departing.

CHAPTER XV

THE tapers were flaming clear in the arched halls of the castle; Hildegardis had just quitted the arm of her lord, to lead off a dance with the old Duke, when Edwald beckoned to his brother-in-arms, and both walked out into the moonshiny garden.

'Ah! Froda, my high, lordly hero,' said Edwald, after some pause; 'wert thou but as happy as I! But thy look, earnest and thoughtful, fixes on the ground; or glows impatient skyward. It were unspeakable if thou hadst really borne a secret longing in thy heart for Hildegardis; and I, foolish boy, had now, favoured in so incomprehensible a manner, stepped in thy way.'

'Be at ease, good Edkin,' smiled the Danish hero. 'On the word of a knight, my thinking and longing is for another than thy fair Hildegardis. Aslauga's glancing gold figure beams in my heart more bright than ever. But hear what I have to tell thee.

'At the instant when we met in the course—O, had I words to express it!—I was overflowed, overshone, dazzled, blinded by Aslauga's gold locks, which came waving round me; and my noble horse must have seen them too; for I felt how he reared and started under me. Thee I no longer saw, the world no longer; nothing but Aslauga's angel face close by me, smiling, blooming like a flower in the sea of sunshine which floated round it. My senses failed me; I knew not where I was till thou wert lifting me from beneath the horse; and then, too, in great joy, I saw that it was her own kind will which had struck me to the ground. But a strange exhaustion lay over me, far more than the mere fall could have caused; and I, at the same time, felt as if my mistress must, of a surety, soon send me

forth on a far mission. I hastened to my chamber to rest, and immediately a deep sleep fell on me. Then came Aslauga to my dreams, more royally adorned than ever; she entered, sat down by the head of my couch, and said: "Haste, array thee in all the pomp of thy silver armour, for thou art not a marriage guest only, thou art also the——" And before the word was spoken, she had melted away like a dream; and I felt great haste to fulfil her command, and was rejoiced in heart. But now, even in the middle of the festival, I seem to myself so solitary as I never was before, and cannot cease thinking what the unfinished speech of my mistress could have meant.'

'Thou art of far higher soul, Froda, than I,' said Edwald after a short silence; 'and I cannot soar after thee in thy joys. Tell me, however, has a deep sadness never seized thee, that thou shouldst serve so distant a mistress; alas! a mistress who is almost ever hidden from thee?'

'No, Edwald; not so,' answered Froda, with eyes gleaming rapture. 'I know still that she despises not my service; nay, there are times when she deigns to show herself before me. O! I am a happy, too happy knight and singer.'

'And yet thy silence to-day, thy troubled musing?'

'Not troubled, dear Edkin; but so inward, so deep from the heart, and so strangely unaccountable, withal. But this, too, like everything I feel or encounter, comes all from the words and commands of Aslauga. How can it fail, then, to be something beautiful, and to lead to some high mark?'

A squire, who had hastened after them, gave notice that the ducal bridegroom was stayed for in the torch-dance; and Edwald, in returning, desired his friend to

take his place in the stately ceremony next to him and Hildegardis. Froda assented, with a friendly nod.

CHAPTER XVI

THE horns and hautboys were already raising their stately tones: Edwald hastened to offer his hand to his fair bride; and whilst he walked with her to the middle of the gay floor, Froda was requesting of the noble dame nearest him, not heeding further who she was, to rise with him for the torch-dance; and, on her consent, the two took their place next the married pair.

But what were his feelings when a light began to gleam from his partner, before which the torch in his left hand lost its brightness! Scarcely did he dare, in sweet awe-struck hope, to turn his eyes on the dame; and when at last he did so, his boldest wishes and longings were fulfilled. Adorned in a shining bridal-crown of precious stones, Aslauga, in solemn loveliness, was dancing beside him, and beaming on him from amid the sunny splendour of her gold hair, with enrapturing looks.

The amazed spectators could not turn an eye from the mysterious pair: the hero in his silver mail, with the uplifted torch in his hand, pacing on, earnest and joyful, with measured tread; his mistress beside him, rather floating than stepping, and from her golden locks raying forth such brightness, that you might have thought the day was peering in through the night; and where a look could penetrate through all this beamy glory to her face, entrancing heart and sense with the unutterably blissful smile of her eyes and mouth.

Towards the end of the dance, she bent towards Froda, and whispered with a kind, trustful air; and

with the last tones of the horns and hautboys, she had disappeared.

No one of the curious onlookers had the courage to question the Northman about his partner; Hildegardis did not seem to have observed her. But shortly before the end of the festival, Edwald approached his friend, and asked in a whisper: 'Was it—?' —'Yes, dear youth,' answered Froda, 'thy marriage-dance has been glorified by the presence of the purest beauty that was ever seen in any land. Ah! and if I understand her whisper rightly, thou shalt not any more behold me sighing and languishing on this clayey earth. But I dare scarcely hope it. Now, good night, dear Edkin, good night. So soon as I may, I will tell thee all.'

CHAPTER XVII

Light, gay morning dreams were still flitting round Edwald's head; when all at once he thought a clear splendour shone over him. He remembered Aslauga; but it was Froda, whose gold helm of locks was now beaming with a no less sunny brightness than Aslauga's flowing hair. 'Ha,' thought Edwald in his dream, 'how has my beloved brother grown so fair!' And Froda said to him: 'I will sing thee somewhat, Edkin; low, quite low, that Hildegardis may not awaken. Listen to me:

> She came in her brightness, fair as day,
> To where in his sleep her true Knight lay:
> She held in her small and light-white hand,
> A plaything, a glancing moon-gold band;
> She wound it about his hair and her own,
> Still singing the while: We two are one!

All round them the world lay poor and dim,
She mounts in her sheen aloft with him:
He stood in a garden sweet and bright,
The Angels do name it: Land of Light.

'So finely thou hast never in thy life sung before,' said the dreaming youth.

'That I well believe, Edkin,' said Froda, smiling, and vanished.

But Edwald continued dreaming, dreaming; and many other visions passed before him, all of a lovely cast, though he could not recollect them, when far in the morning he opened his smiling eyes. Froda and his mysterious song alone stood clear before his memory. He now saw well that his friend was dead; but he sorrowed not because of it in his mind, feeling, as he did, that the pure heart of the hero and singer could nowhere find its proper joy, save in the Land of Light, in blissful communion with the high spirits of the ancient time. He glided softly from his sleeping Hildegardis, into the chamber of the departed. He was lying on his bed of rest, almost as beautiful as he had looked in the vision; and the gold helmet on his head was entwisted in a wondrous, beaming lock of hair. Then Edwald made a fair shady grave on consecrated ground; summoned the castle chaplain, and with his help interred in it his heroic Froda.

As he returned, Hildegardis awoke. Astonished at his look of solemn, humble cheerfulness, she inquired where he had been, and with a smile he answered: 'I have been burying the body of my beloved Froda, who has last night passed away to his gold-haired mistress.' Thereupon he told Hildegardis the whole story of Aslauga's Knight; and continued in undisturbed mild

joy, though for some time after this, a little stiller than formerly.

He was often to be found sitting at his friend's grave, singing this little song to his cithern:

Aslauga's Knight,
Fair is the dance
Where Angels glance,
And stars do sound the measure!
On earthly fight,
Through change and chance,
To guide us right,
Send down thy light,
Thy heart's undying treasure!

THE TWO CAPTAINS

CHAPTER I

THE mild air of evening was rising from the sea on the beach of Malaga, awakening the guitars of many lively singers both on board the ships in harbour and in the houses of the city and the pretty villas around it. These harmonious sounds, vying with the notes of the birds, greeted the refreshing breeze and, mingling with the fragrant scents of sea and meadow, hovered over the paradisal region. A few groups of infantry lying on the beach, where they meant to spend the night so as to be ready to go on board at early morning, beguiled by the charm of the delightful evening, forgot that they had intended to devote their last hours on European soil to the comfort and security of sleep; they began to sing soldiers' songs, to pledge one another with fiery draughts of the wine of Xeres from their well-filled flasks, and to drink long life to the high and mighty Emperor Charles V, who was now besieging the pirates' nest of Tunis, and to whose support they were destined to sail.

These cheerful soldiers were not all of one race; only two companies consisted of Spaniards, the third was made up entirely of German men-at-arms, and the variety of manners and speech among the various troops had given rise, now and again, to interchange of banter. But now the thought that they were so soon to sail in company on this glorious venture, together with the enlivening influence of the soft southern evening on every man's whole being, united them all in a comradeship complete and undisturbed. The Germans tried to talk Castilian, the Spaniards German, with-

out any one troubling to think of the slips and confusions this involved; every one helped his neighbour, and the sole desire of each was to get nearer to his comrade through his comrade's language.

At some distance from this clamour a young German captain, Sir Heimbert of Waldhausen, had sat down under a cork-tree, looking up at the stars with a steadfast gaze that made him seem a different person from the lively, sociable companion that his comrades had known and loved in him hitherto. A Spanish captain, Don Federigo Mendez, came up to him, young like himself, and like himself, too, skilled in all exercises of arms, but in general as severe and thoughtful in bearing as Heimbert was gentle and lively. 'Forgive me, Señor,' began the stately Spaniard, 'if I disturb you in your meditations; but, as I have often had the honour to know you for a very brave fighter and a most faithful brother-in-arms at many perilous moments, I should like to beg of you, before all others, a knightly service, if your own plans for to-night permit it.' 'Dear Sir,' replied the friendly Heimbert, 'I have important business before sunrise, but till midnight I am quite free and ready to do you any service as a brother-in-arms.'

'That is enough,' said Federigo, 'for by midnight the accents will long have died away, in which I am to bid farewell to the dearest treasure I have ever known in this my native city. But that you may be informed of the whole story, as a noble comrade should be, listen to me for a few moments and attend.

'Some time before I left Malaga in our great Emperor's army, to help spread the glory of his arms through Italy, I served, as young knights do, a beautiful maiden of this city called Lucilla. She had

then barely reached the borderland that parts childhood from early womanhood, and just as I, a boy just old enough to bear arms, offered her my devotion in the spirit of childlike friendship, so my young mistress accepted it in the same spirit. At last I went on to Italy and, as you know, from that time we became companions, passed through many a fierce fight and many an enchanting scene in that delightful land. Amid all changes I kept the picture of my gentle mistress unchanged in my heart and never ceased in my devoted service to her, though I cannot conceal from you that it was more to satisfy the word I had pledged at my departure than from any passionate and commanding impulse of my heart. When, a few weeks ago, we returned from foreign lands to my native city I found my lady married to a rich and distinguished knight of this place. Jealousy, that almost invincible child of heaven and hell, now spurred me on to follow Lucilla's every movement: from her house to church, from there to the doorstep of some woman friend, from there again to her home or to a circle of noble knights and ladies, everywhere following where it was possible to go. But when I was at last convinced that no other young knight was in her service and that she now belonged, with all her heart, only to the husband of her parents' choice, though not of her own desire, I was content, and would not trouble you at this moment, but that Lucilla came to me two days ago and whispered in my ear that I must not vex her lord, for he was very passionate and bold; she was not the least in danger herself, especially as he loved and honoured her above everything, but his anger would be all the more dreadful towards me. You can easily imagine, my noble brother-in-arms, that I could not refrain from

proving my contempt for all danger to myself: that I did not cease to follow Lucilla's every footstep, and sang serenades every night in front of her flower-decked windows, till the morning-star began to be mirrored in the sea. To-night Lucilla's husband travels at midnight to Madrid and from that time forward I will avoid the street where he lives, but until then, as soon as it is dark enough to make a serenade appropriate, I mean to make love romances echo without ceasing before his house. I have hints, indeed, that he and Lucilla's brothers, too, are ready to attack me, and that is why I have asked you, Señor, to bear me company with your brave sword on this short adventure.' Heimbert grasped the Spaniard's hand with ready consent.

'To show you,' he said, 'dear Sir, how gladly I do what you ask, I will repay confidence with confidence and tell you a pleasant incident which happened to me in this city, and after midnight will beg of you a trifling service in return. My story is a short one and will not keep us longer than we should have to wait, in any case, to let the twilight sink into deeper shadow.

'On the day we entered Malaga I enjoyed myself walking in the lovely gardens there are here. I have been a long time in southern countries, but I am inclined to think that it is the dreams that carry me home to Germany every night that make everything here still seem so strange and astonishing. At least, every morning, when I awake, I am as much astonished again at everything as if I had just arrived. And so that day I wandered along by the aloe bushes, among laurels and oleanders, like one amazed. Suddenly there was a cry near me and a tall lady in white rushed fainting into my arms, while her companions ran past

in different directions. A soldier always knows how to gather his wits together pretty quickly, and I was soon aware that there was a mad bull behind the fair lady. I quickly lifted her over a flowering hedge and myself followed, whereupon the beast, blind with anger, rushed past us. I have heard nothing more of it since, except that some young knights in a neighbouring courtyard had wanted to practise on it for the bull-fight, and that was how it had forced its way madly through the gardens. I was now left quite alone and with the insensible lady in my arms; she was so beautiful to look upon that I never in my life felt happier, and never more sad. At last I laid her down on the turf and sprinkled her angelic forehead with water from a fountain near by. It did, indeed, come into my head that one ought to loosen the dress of an insensible person, but, ye heavens! how could I dare to do so with this pure face before me? However, she came to herself, and as she opened her heavenly eyes I thought I could guess how the spirits of the glorified feel.

'She thanked me in words as modest as they were charming and called me her knight, but in my blessed enchantment I could not utter a word and she must almost have thought me dumb. At last my tongue was loosened, and poured forth the petition of my heart, that this gracious vision would often show herself again in this garden; in a few weeks the Emperor's service would drive me to burning Africa; till then I begged for the sight of her blessed face. She looked at me half smilingly, half tenderly, and said "Yes". She has kept her word, and has appeared almost every day, though we have not spoken much to one another, for, though sometimes she was quite alone, I could do

little but walk amazed and enchanted by her side. Many a time she has sung a song, and I have sung one too. When I told her yesterday that our departure was so near, there was dew, so it seemed, in her heavenly eyes. I, too, must have looked sad, for she said, as if to comfort me, "Good, childlike soldier, one can trust you as one trusts an angel: after midnight, before twilight dawns for your voyage, I give you permission to bid me farewell here. It is well if you can find a faithful and discreet companion to prevent all entrance from the street, for many a man-at-arms may be wandering back through the city from a farewell feast in overflowing spirits." God has granted me such a companion, and I go once again in gladness to meet the gracious maiden.'

'Would that the enterprise to which you call me,' answered Federigo, 'were more dangerous, that I might prove to you in more active sort how I am yours with my life's blood; but come, noble comrade, the time is at hand for my adventure.' And, wrapped in their cloaks, the young men quickly strode up into the city, Federigo carrying a fine guitar under his arm.

CHAPTER II

The night-violets at Lucilla's window were beginning to exhale their refreshing fragrance, when Federigo, across the way, leaning in the angle of a church that cast its broad shadow over him, began to tune his guitar. Heimbert had posted himself near at hand behind a pillar, with his naked sword beneath his cloak, while his clear blue eyes, like two sentinel stars, quiet and penetrating, ranged around. Federigo sang:

Mid the meadow's spring-like blossom
Stood a lovely flow'r in May-time,
White and pink, my young eyes fed on,
Tall and delicate, and often
Would I sing its tender beauty,
With a lover's flattering verses.
Then I went to distant lands,
Voyaging on bold adventures,
And returning find my flower
Now, alas! no more in freedom,
But a gardener has removed it,
Guards it close in narrow borders
With high bars of gold encircled,
Bids me shun my lovely flower.
Let him keep his bars all golden,
Keep his bolts of stubborn iron,
But about there still I wander
Touch my lute's soft notes at night-time,
Striving, as before, my flower's
Precious beauty to be praising,
And the gardener cannot venture
This my modest joy to grudge me.

'That depends, Señor,' said a man, stepping close to Federigo, and taking him, as he thought, by surprise, but Federigo, warned of his coming by a sign from his watchful comrade, was able with greater coolness to reply: 'If you are minded to bring an action against my guitar, for such events she has a tongue of steel that has done her good advocate's-service more than once. Which do you prefer to talk to? The guitar or her advocate?'

The stranger was embarrassed and silent, and meanwhile Heimbert had approached two cloaked figures, who stood a few paces off, ready, it seemed, to cut off his comrade's escape, if he should attempt it. 'I believe, Sirs,' said Heimbert in a friendly tone, 'that

we are on the same business, to try to prevent any one from hindering the conversation of these two gentlemen; for my part, at least, you may be sure that any one who wishes to interfere with their discussion will have my rapier in his heart. Have no fear; I think we are ready to do our duty properly, whatever happens.' The cloaked figures bowed with polite embarrassment and said not a word.

The cool self-possession with which the two soldiers treated the whole transaction had put their three opponents to great confusion, and they did not quite know how to start their quarrel; but finally Federigo again tuned his guitar and prepared to begin another song. This sign of contempt, as if there were no question of danger or even of doubt so much angered Lucilla's husband—for it was he who had taken his stand by Don Federigo—that without more ado he drew his sword from its sheath and cried, with a voice suppressed by rage, 'Draw, or I run you through before you know.'

'Most willingly, Señor,' replied Federigo coolly. 'You need not threaten me, for all that; you may just as well speak quietly', and with that he laid his guitar carefully on a ledge of the church wall, seized his rapier, and made an elegant bow to his adversary; and so the fight began.

At first the two cloaked figures, Lucilla's brothers, stood quietly at Heimbert's side, but, when Federigo began to get the better and press their brother-in-law hard, they made as if they would take part in the combat; whereupon Heimbert made his strong sword flash in the moonlight and said: 'Surely you will not expect me to fulfil upon you the threat I uttered just now! Do not, I beg you, force me to do that, but,

if it must be, you need not doubt that I shall keep my word.' Thereupon the two young men stood motionless, surprised both at the firmness and at the frank friendliness which Heimbert's words expressed. Meanwhile Federigo, though he pressed his opponent, took care not to wound him, and at last, with a dexterous stroke, whipped his rapier from his hand, so that Lucilla's husband reeled some paces backwards at this unexpected attack and the alarm of being disarmed. But Federigo, with a clever stroke, flung the rapier he had captured into the air, caught it again near the point and, handing the hilt to his opponent with a gracious gesture, said: 'Take it, Señor, and I hope our affair of honour is now settled, for as things are I can now confess to you that I am here only to prove that I am afraid of no sword in the world. Besides, the old cathedral bell strikes twelve, and I give my word of honour as knight and soldier that Donna Lucilla has no pleasure in my attendance, and that from this time forward, though I should stay a hundred years at Malaga, I will no longer make love or serenade in this place. Order your carriage and God be with you!' Then he bowed once more to his defeated adversary with solemn, stately politeness and moved away. Heimbert followed, first shaking hands warmly with the two young men and saying: 'No, you must never think of interfering when two others are engaged in an affair of honour. Mark my words!'

He soon overtook his companion and walked along beside him full of eager expectation, while his heart beat with a mixture of joy and sadness, so that he could not utter a single word. Don Federigo Mendez, too, was silent; only when Heimbert stopped at the elegant garden gate and, pointing cheerfully to the

orange branches hanging down with their rich fruit, said: 'We are at the place, dear comrade,' only then did the Spaniard open his mouth as if to question him, but then turned away at once and merely said: 'Of course, I guard the entrance until dawn; you have my word of honour.' He then began to walk up and down like a sentinel with drawn sword in front of the gate, and Heimbert, trembling with joy, stepped into the fragrant shadow of the darkening alleys.

CHAPTER III

He had not long to look for the gracious star that he felt was chosen henceforward to guide the course of his whole life. Not far from the entrance the slight form of the lady came towards him, gently weeping, as the rising full moon showed him, but yet smiling with infinite charm, so that her tears seemed rather an ornament of pearls than a veil of sorrow. In joy and sadness, deep beyond measure, the two lovers went silently side by side through the blossoming bushes; now and again a branch, waving in the night air, brushed the guitar in the lady's arm, and brought out a soft murmur that mingled with the nightingale's song, or her gentle touch awoke the strings to trembling chords. As the meteors shot across the sky they seemed to follow the vanished notes of the guitar. That night, indeed, might be called a blessed one for both youth and maiden, for their feelings had no trace of wild passion or impure desire. They walked side by side, happy in God's gift to them, and so little longing for anything beyond that even the transitoriness of the present moment grew dim in their thoughts and sank into the background.

In the midst of the beautiful fenced garden was a large open lawn, adorned with tall white statues surrounding a sweetly flashing fountain. The two lovers sat down on its brink, now fixing their innocent eyes on the moonlight flashing in the water, now refreshing them with the sight of each other's fair features. The girl touched her guitar and Heimbert, under the impulse of a mysterious yearning, sang to it these words, or something like them:

Dear heart, whose word, unspoken,
Withholds from me thy name,
Ah! were thy silence broken
By some revealing token,
I'd sing sweet songs for ever
Of what my heart's endeavour
Is now and always eager to proclaim.

He was silent of a sudden, and blushed deeply, fearing he had been far too bold. The lady blushed, too, and turned away, while her fingers still toyed with the strings, and half in a dream sang to them:

By the fount whence gleaming moonlight
Quivers, mirrored in the water,
Who unto the youth is singing
On the tender turf beside her?
Must the maid say what her name is
When unnerved she feels the tumult
Of the glow of shame within her,
Shame that sets her cheeks on fire?
Rather name we first the warrior,
Who one day, of days most famous
For Castile, victorious often,
Just a lad of sixteen summers,
Fought before Pavia, bringing
Fear to Franks, to Spain fresh glory.
Heimbert name we as the hero,

Victor in the noblest battles,
And beside the knight undaunted
Sitting on the turf so tender
Telling him her name, nor troubled
Now by shame, is Donna Clara.

'By Heaven!' said Heimbert, his face suffused with a blush it did not know before, 'by Heaven! Donna Clara, Pavia was but the merry victory of a tournament and, if I had to face more serious combats later, I could never deserve such overwhelming, such heavenly reward as this! Now I know your name and can call you by it, angelic Donna Clara, Donna Clara light of my eyes! But tell me, whose kind words have spoken of my paltry exploits, and I will be ever bound to him?'

'Does the noble Heimbert of Waldhausen suppose that Spain's noblest families did not send their sons to the field where they faced the heat of battle? You have seen them fight by your side: why should not some kinsman recount to me your glorious deeds?' Meanwhile the silvery tinkle of a bell sounded from a palace near, and Clara whispered, 'The time has come: God keep you, my hero!'; and through a shower of tears she smiled at him and bent her head, and he almost thought he felt the breath of a fragrant kiss upon his lips. When he recovered himself Clara had disappeared, the morning clouds began to flush with red, and Heimbert, proud and happy with a lover's heaven in his heart, went back to the gate to join his friend on guard.

CHAPTER IV

'DEFEND yourself,' said Federigo, as Heimbert issued from the garden, and faced him with drawn sword to attack.

'Hallo! dear friend, you are mistaken,' said the German, with a smile. 'It is I whom you see!'

'Do not imagine, Sir Heimbert of Waldhausen, that I do not know you; but I have kept my word and served my hours of guard, as in honour bound, and now I bid you, without more ado, make ready and fight for your life, as long as the blood flows through your veins and mine.'

'God forbid!' sighed Heimbert. 'I have often heard that there are said to be witches in southern countries that confound men's senses with witchcraft of word and deed, but I have never met it till to-day! Be your true self, good comrade mine, and come back with me to the shore.'

Federigo gave an angry laugh and said: 'Away with your silly delusion! If I must use plain words to make you understand, know that the lady who came to meet you in the shrubbery of my garden here is Donna Clara Mendez, my only sister. Therefore, quick to work, without further preface.'

'God forbid!' cried the young German, without touching his sword. 'You shall be my brother-in-law, but not my murderer; still less will I be yours.' Federigo shook his head impatiently and advanced against his comrade with measured steps, but he remained immovable and said: 'No, I can never harm you, for not only do I love your sister, but you must be the man who told her of the honour and glory of my deeds of war in Italy.'

'When I did tell,' said Federigo, with sullen rage, 'I was a fool. Out with your sword, you cowardly lover, or ——'

Federigo had hardly uttered these words when Heimbert, hot with anger, cried, 'The devil himself

could stand no more!' and tore his sword from its scabbard, and the two young captains, in violent passion, fiercely attacked one another. This was a very different duel from the one Federigo had fought with Lucilla's husband. The two young soldiers were masters of their art: they fought with breast well advanced; their rapiers clashed and struck fire: now this, now that, thrust forward with lightning speed, and then with equally swift skill struck aside by its opponent. Their left feet stood as if firmly rooted on the ground, their right now advanced in bold attack and then withdrawn as lightly to the pose of secure defence. From the deliberateness and the quiet, unlaxing anger with which they both fought one might gather that one or other of them would meet his death beneath the overhanging branches of the orange-trees, now lit up with the flush of dawn, and this, no doubt, would have happened had not the roar of a cannon from the harbour suddenly been heard through the silent twilight.

The combatants paused as at a recognized word of command and listened, while each counted aloud, and, as both said 'thirty', the cannon fired again.

'That is the signal for leaving, Señor,' said Don Federigo. 'We are now in the Emperor's service, and all fighting is at an end, except against the enemies of Charles the Fifth.'

'Of course,' answered Heimbert, 'but when we have done with Tunis, and the war is at an end, I shall know how to demand satisfaction from you for the "cowardly lover".'

'And I,' said Federigo, 'for your meetings with my sister. That, too, is a matter of course.'

With these words the two captains hastened down

to the shore, saw to the embarkation of their troops, and the sun, rising over the sea, saw them set sail on one and the same vessel.

CHAPTER V

THE voyagers had to contend with contrary winds for a long time and when, at last, they sighted the Barbary coast, the shades of evening had gathered so darkly over the sea that no captain in the little squadron ventured to come to anchor in the shallow waters. The sea by now was calmer and they cruised about waiting for morning, and the soldiers, filled with a passion for battle and honour, crowded impatiently on deck, contemplating the scene of their future exploits with longing eyes.

Meanwhile the heavy guns of attackers and attacked thundered unceasingly around the fortress of Golita, and as night brought blacker clouds over the scene of action, the glow of the firing cannons became more clearly visible, the fiery tracks of the red-hot balls were to be seen flying swiftly through the air in many cross directions, and producing their effects in flame and destruction with increasing clearness. The Mussulmans must have attempted a sortie, for a brisk musketry fire suddenly broke out amid the roar of the cannon. The fighting approached the Christian trenches and those on board ship were in doubt whether the outworks of the besiegers were in danger or not. At last they saw that the Turks had been driven back into the fortress, the Christians pursued them closely, and a loud triumphant cry of victory rose from the Spanish camp. Golita was taken.

No one who has a brave heart in his bosom need be told how the men on board ship, young men of tried valour in war, were fired by the solemn spectacle: for others description would be superfluous. Heimbert and Federigo stood near one another.

'Somehow I feel,' said Federigo half aside, 'that tomorrow I must plant my standard as victor on yonder height, which glows so crimson clear in the light of the fiery shot and the flames of Golita.'

'That is my feeling, too,' said Heimbert, but then the two angry captains said no more and turned indignantly from one another.

At length the longed-for dawn began to glimmer, the ships drew near the shore, and the landing of the troops began, while an officer was sent immediately to the camp, to inform Alva, the mighty general, of the arrival of the reinforcements. The troops were quickly drawn up on shore, dressed their lines, and made ready their arms, and stood in martial splendour, awaiting their great commander. A cloud of dust rose in the early light of morning, and the officer, hurrying back, announced the general's approach, and as in Spanish 'alba' [1] means the glow of dawn, the Spaniards rejoiced aloud at the coincidence, as a happy omen, for the first beams of the sun were visible as the general's mounted staff approached.

The grave, lean figure of the commander soon appeared, mounted on a coal-black charger, a great Andalusian stallion. The great hero rode once up and down the line, halted in the centre, looked at the ranks with grave satisfaction, and said: 'You are in capital review order. That is well; I like to see you so. It shows me that, young as you are, you are tried

[1] In German Alva's name is Alba.

soldiers. We will have a review first and then I will lead you to something more lively.' Thereupon he dismounted, walked to the right wing, and began to review company after company with the greatest precision, taking each captain aside and inquiring into every minute detail. A few stray cannon-balls from the fortress now and again whistled over the heads of the troops. Then Alva would stand still and cast a quick glance at his soldiers, but as each time no eyelash moved a contented smile passed over his stern, pale face.

When he had reviewed both wings, he again mounted his horse, galloped to the centre, and stroking his long, waving beard, said: 'You are in good order, my men, and therefore you shall take part in the glorious day which now dawns for all our Christian Armada. We are attacking Barbarossa, my men. Do you hear the drums and fifes in the camp? Do you see them advancing to meet the Emperor? That flank of his position is for you.'

'Long live Charles the Fifth!' was shouted through the ranks.

Alva beckoned the captains to him and assigned his task to each; in general he mixed German and Spanish troops together, to fire the spirit of the soldiers with emulation, and so it happened that it fell to Heimbert and Federigo to storm the same height, which now in the glow of dawn they recognized at once as that which they had seen shining with such fiery promise on the previous night. The cannon thundered, the trumpets blared, the colours waved proudly in the wind, the officers gave the word to advance, and on all sides the troops marched to the attack.

CHAPTER VI

THREE times had Heimbert and Federigo forced their way almost to the parapet of a fortification on the height and three times were they driven back, with their troops, into the valley, by the Turks' furious resistance. The Mussulmans yelled with triumph at the retreating enemy, clashed their arms together in the joy of victory, and with laughing scorn beckoned them to come on again up the slope and offer heart and brain to their scimitars and their body to the beams that were crashing down. The two captains, gnashing their teeth, reformed their ranks, which now, after the three vain attacks, had to close up, to fill the gaps left by their fallen or severely wounded comrades. Meanwhile, a rumour ran through the Christian army that a witch was fighting among their enemy and helping them to victory.

The Duke of Alva rode up to the spot. He looked up at the breach with his keen eye. 'What? The enemy lines not yet broken here?' he said, shaking his head. 'From you two young men and your troops I should have expected a break-through!'

'Do you hear? do you hear?' cried the two captains, and repeating the hero's words they strode through the ranks. The soldiers shouted loud and demanded to be led against the enemy; even some of the mortally wounded used their last effort to cry 'Forward, comrades!' In a moment the great Alva, swift as an arrow, had leapt from his horse, seized a partisan from the stiff hand of one of the fallen and, suddenly standing in front of both troops, said: 'I will share your glory. In the name of God and of the Blessed Virgin! Forward, my children!'

They mounted the hill joyfully and all hearts beat high with confidence, while the war-cry rose to heaven proclaiming victory; already some began to shout 'Victory, Victory!'. The Mussulmans were startled and began to give way, when suddenly, like the vision of an indignant angel, a maiden came forward in the Turkish ranks, clad in purple, gold-embroidered robes, and the terrified troops once more raised a shout of triumph to their Allah and with his name coupled the cry 'Zelinda! Zelinda!'. Then the maiden drew a casket from under her arm, opened it, breathed into it, and hurled it down on the Christians. A wild roar burst from this vessel of destruction and in a cloud of fiery dust and sparks scattered an army of rockets, grenades, and other fatal messengers of death. The troops, taken by surprise, paused in their assault.

'On!' cried Alva, and 'On!' cried the two captains, but a flaming arrow fastened on the Duke's plumed hat, and amid a sound of hissing and crackling fire the general fell fainting down the slope, and nothing could stop the flight of the German and Spanish troops from the fearsome height. Once more the storm had failed, and the Mussulmans were triumphant. Zelinda's beauty shone like a fatal star amid the victorious enemy.

When Alva opened his eyes Heimbert was standing above him, with his cloak scorched and his arm and face scarred by the fire, which he had first extinguished on the general's head and then defended him from a second flaming mass that had poured down on him from the height. The Duke was about to thank his preserver, when some soldiers galloped up in search of him, with the news that the Saracens were beginning an attack on the opposite side of the army. Alva,

without losing a word, threw himself on the first horse brought to him and rode hard to the point where the most threatening danger called.

Federigo, with flashing eye, gazed up at the rampart where the maiden, shining bright, swung into the air with her snow-white arm a two-pointed spear, in act to hurl it, while she spoke now in Arabic to cheer on the Mussulmans, now in Castilian to the Christians below her words of scorn. Then Don Federigo Mendez cried: 'Oh, foolish maiden! she thinks to frighten me, and yet stands there to lure me on, a prize of victory that none can resist.' And as though magic wings had sprung from his shoulders, he began to fly up the height with such mighty speed that Alva's storming ascent now seemed like a snail's pace. Before any one was aware, he was on the hill-top, had wrested shield and spear from the maiden, and clasped her in his arms, struggling to carry her down to his men, while Zelinda, in the agony of despair, clung with both hands to a palisade. Her cry for help remained without effect, partly because the Turks fancied that the young man's almost miraculous exploit had destroyed the maiden's magic power, partly because the faithful Heimbert, taking quick note of his companion's deed of daring, had quickly led both companies to renew the assault and was already standing once more on the height, in furious combat hand to hand with its defenders. This time the fury of the Mussulmans, broken by superstition and surprise, could do nothing against the heroic onset of the Christian soldiers. Spaniards and Germans, supported by disciplined squadrons of their men, broke through the enemy. The Mussulmans scattered with fearful shrieks, the battle rolled steadily on in its flood of victory, and the

banners of the Holy Roman Empire and of the royal house of Castile waved side by side in celebration of victory on the glorious battle-field before the ramparts of Tunis.

CHAPTER VII

ZELINDA, in the press of victors and vanquished, had escaped from Federigo's arms, and then flew so swiftly before him through the regions she knew so well that, though love and desire gave him wings, she was soon out of sight. The anger of the infuriated Spaniard only flamed more fiercely against the infidel foe. Wherever any knots of them formed for resistance, he hastened in front of his troops, who gathered round him as round a victorious standard as he forced his way on everywhere, while Heimbert was always at his side, shielding him from every kind of danger, to which the young man, drunk with victory and anger, often thoughtlessly exposed himself.

Next day they learnt of Barbarossa's flight from the city and the victorious troops thronged without resistance through the gates of Tunis. Federigo's and Heimbert's companies were together again. Thick clouds of smoke began to eddy through the streets; the soldiers had to shake floating flakes of fire from their cloaks and richly-plumed storm-helmets, on which they often began to flame.

'I hope the enemy have not set fire to a powder magazine in desperation,' cried the thoughtful Heimbert, and Federigo, showing himself at one with him by word and sign, hastened to the quarter from which the smoke was issuing, and the troops gallantly forced their way after him. The sudden turn of a street brought

them before a splendid palace, with nobly planned windows, from which flames were pouring and with their fitful fire, like funeral torches, cast a most solemn light on the costly building in the hour of its downfall, now illuminating this or that part of the massive structure with a glare as of daylight, and anon letting them sink back into awful darkness of smoke and vapour. And there, like a faultless statue, the glory of the splendid building, stood Zelinda on a dizzy projection, encircled by fiery flames from below, calling to her fellow-believers to rescue the wisdom of centuries preserved in the building. The projection began to totter with the flames that roared beneath it, single stones began to fall, and Federigo called in agony to his threatened mistress above him, and she had hardly withdrawn her lovely feet, when the stone where she had stood was loosened and rattled with crushing force on the pavement below. Zelinda disappeared into the interior of the burning palace, and Federigo rushed up its marble staircase, while Heimbert, his faithful protector, followed him. Their quick steps carried them into high, echoing halls, with arches interlaced above their heads, and room opening into room in labyrinthine fashion. The walls on all sides were adorned with splendid presses, in which were to be seen piles of rolls—parchment, papyrus, and palm-leaf—some of them inscribed with the writing of centuries long past, which had now reached the term of their existence; for the crackling flames were already consuming them and like serpents stretching their fiery heads from one cupboard to another, flames kindled by the savage rage of some Spanish soldiers, who had hoped to find plunder there and when they found only inscribed rolls in the rich

building, their disappointment turned to anger, the more so as they fancied that the characters they lit on were devilish wizardry. Federigo flew, as in a dream, through the strange halls already blazing with fire, always calling Zelinda, heeding nothing, and thinking of nothing but his enchanting, beloved one. Heimbert stayed a long time by his side, until at last they reached a staircase of cedar, leading to a higher story, and here Federigo stood still and listened, saying: 'She is speaking upstairs, speaking loudly! She needs my help!' and sprang up the stairs that were already bursting into flame. Heimbert delayed a moment, he saw the staircase begin to totter, and thought to warn his companion back, but at the very moment the fragile stairs crashed and collapsed amid the bursting flames. He could only just see Federigo lay hold of some brazen bars above and swing himself up by them; the stair was gone, he could not follow. Heimbert with presence of mind spent no time in idle gazing, and hastened to look for other stairs in the neighbouring halls which might bring him to his vanished friend.

Meanwhile Federigo, following the voice's lure, had reached a gallery, in the centre of which the collapse of a floor formed a fiery abyss, while the colonnades on either side were still standing. The young man saw the beloved form facing him, clinging with one hand to a pillar, while with the other she threatened back some Spanish soldiers who seemed ready to lay hands on her at any moment. Her dainty feet were already tottering insecurely above the glowing ruins of the abyss. Federigo could not cross to her; the breadth of the gulf between them made a jump impossible. Trembling for fear that if he called his voice might make the maiden fall into the abyss below, through

terror or anger of despair, he scarcely raised his voice, as he spoke across the flaming gulf with bated breath: 'Zelinda, Zelinda, yield to no dreadful thoughts! your rescuer is here.'

The maiden turned her queenly head, and Federigo, seeing her calm and self-possessed, cried to his soldiers with a thundering voice of command: 'Back! shameless plunderers; whoever takes a step towards the lady, incurs the vengeance of my arm.'

They started and seemed ready to turn back, but then one of them said: 'The knight will not swallow us, the gulf between is a bit too broad for that, and as for the beauty throwing herself down, it almost looks as if the young knight were her lover, and a lady who has a lover is not likely to throw herself away.'

At this they all laughed and again came forward; Zelinda tottered at the edge of the abyss, but Federigo, with a lion's fury, had already torn his targe from his arm and whirling it in his right hand let it fly at the soldiers, and with such sure aim that the bold ringleader, struck heavily on the head, fell senseless to the ground. The rest stood still again. 'Away with you!' cried Federigo with a voice of command, 'or my dagger shall strike the next comer as surely. May I be lost to all eternity if I rest until I have found each one of your robber faces and sacrificed them to my anger!' The dagger flashed in the youth's hand, and a wilder fury in his eye; the soldiers fled. Then Zelinda bowed graciously to her deliverer, and taking up some rolls of palm-leaves, which lay at her feet and might have slipped from her hand before, she quickly disappeared through a side-door of the gallery. Federigo searched for her in vain in the burning palace.

CHAPTER VIII

THE great Alva took his stand in an open place in the middle of the captured city, with his chief officers, and made his interpreters put question after question to the Osmanli prisoners, to discover what had become of the marvellous woman, who had been seen upon the ramparts inspiring them so formidably; never, he was sure, had the earth borne so lovely an enchantress. Nothing certain could be gathered from their answers, for though the persons questioned knew that the fair Zelinda was a mistress of secret magic and recognized by all the people as a worshipful lady, they could not say whence she had come on her rare visits to Tunis or whither she could now have fled. They were beginning to threaten the prisoners for their obstinacy when an old dervish, who had not been noticed before, came forward and said with a grim smile: 'If any one desires to search for her, he may start at once. I will not conceal what I know of the way she has taken and I know something; but I must first have a promise that I shall not be compelled to bear him company. Otherwise my lips remain closed; you may do what you like with me.'

He looked like a man who meant to keep his word, and Alva, who besides was pleased with the man's firmness, so like his own, gave him the assurance he asked for, whereupon the dervish began his story. He had once, he said, penetrated into the almost endless desert, impelled perhaps by idle curiosity, perhaps by better motives; then he had lost his way, when, faint to death, he had reached one of those fertile islands of the sandy ocean, which they call an oasis. Here followed a description, painted with oriental loveli-

ness, of the wonderful things to be seen there, at which at one moment the hearts of his hearers were filled with longing and at another their hair stood on end with terror, though from the strange speech of the narrator and the rapid flow of his words they could hardly follow half his story. It came to this, that Zelinda lived on this flowery island, amid the sandy plains of the desert, surrounded by an awesome magic company, and that the dervish knew for certain that she had started to return there half an hour before. The almost scornful words with which he ended made it clear that it was his dearest wish that some Christians should be misguided enough to undertake a journey that would prove their certain destruction. At the same time he added a strong oath that what he said was true, with the solemn, steadfast air of a man who swore to nothing but what he recognized as undoubted truth. The circle of officers stood round him in thoughtful amazement.

At this moment Heimbert came forward and, saluting, asked to speak: he had just been recalled by the rigour of service from the burning palace where he had been searching for his friend, and ordered to this spot, to prepare the troops to meet any possible rising in the captured city.

'What is your will, young warrior?' said Alva, bowing courteously. 'I know you well, with your fresh and smiling face: a short time since you were my guardian angel. Your request is granted before you make it, for you can ask nothing that is not honourable and chivalrous.'

'Noble Duke,' replied Heimbert, blushing with gracious modesty, 'if I may ask a favour, grant me leave this very hour to pursue the fair Zelinda on the

ways that yonder wondrous dervish has told us of.' The great commander nodded assent and added that so noble an adventure could not be trusted to a nobler knight.

'I do not know that!' cried an angry voice out of the throng. 'But I do know that the adventure is mine before all others, even if it is bestowed as a prize for the capture of Tunis. For who was first on the hill and in the city?'

'It was Don Federigo Mendez,' said Heimbert, taking the speaker by the hand and presenting him to the commander. 'If it is for his sake that I have to lose the reward just granted me, I must be patient, for he has served the whole army and the Emperor's arms better than I.'

'Neither of you shall lose his reward,' said the great Alva. 'Each of you from this moment has permission to seek the lady, by whatever ways he thinks most fitting.' And quick as lightning the two captains flew from the circle in different directions.

CHAPTER IX

A SEA of sand stretching to the furthest horizon, with no distinctive object on its vast surface, unbroken white, unbroken desolation: that is the aspect that the fearsome desert of Sahara presents to the eye of the wanderer who has lost himself in these appalling regions. It is like the sea too in that it throws up waves and that a cloudy vapour often lies on its surface. But its waves are not the gently-playing waves that link together all the coasts of the earth, where every wave as it rolls in seems to bring you a message from the most distant and most blooming

island kingdoms, and then rolls back, as if it bore your answer, into love's liquid dance; it is only the dismal mockery of the hot winds, playing with the treacherous sands, which is ever falling back again into its joyless bed and can never come to rest on solid ground where happy men dwell. It is not the gracious cooling sea-air, where friendly fairies make pleasant dalliance, framing from it flowering gardens and splendid colonnades; it is the stifling exhalation reflected by the barren sand in answer to the glowing sun.

The two young men reached it at the same time, and gazed into the pathless chaos before them with a shudder. Zelinda's traces, which could not easily be concealed or lost, had hitherto compelled them for the most part to keep together, though Federigo chafed at it and cast angry glances at his unwelcome companion. Each of them had hoped to overtake Zelinda before the sea of sand, feeling that it would be almost impossible to find her again, if once she were submerged in its whirling depths. And now they had come to this pass, and though inquiry from the neighbouring Berbers revealed the story that a traveller who followed the stars southwards into the desert would come at last to a wondrously flourishing oasis, the home of an enchantress of heavenly beauty, yet the whole tale seemed uncertain and fraught with terror in view of the rolling avalanche of dust.

The young men anxiously scanned the scene, their horses snorted uneasily and shied at the horrible plain as if it were an insidious quicksand, and even their riders seemed to doubt and hesitate. Suddenly, as at one word of command, they sprang from their saddles, loosened their horses' girths, unbridled them,

and let them loose in the desert where nothing could keep them, to find their way back to a happier home. They took some meat and drink from their travelling-bags and carried them on their backs, flung their heavy riding-boots from their feet, and like two brave swimmers plunged into the trackless infinite.

CHAPTER X

WHERE the sun was the sole guide by day and the host of stars by night the two captains soon lost sight of one another, and all the more because Federigo purposely avoided the man he hated. Heimbert's sole thought, on the other hand, was to attain his purpose, and full of joyous confidence in God's help he pursued his way southwards.

Several times night had followed day and day night when Heimbert one evening, as the dark came on, was standing quite alone in the endless desert, unable to see a single fixed object around him. The light flask he carried with him was empty, and instead of the cool air that he had hoped for, the evening brought stifling eddies of sand so that the exhausted traveller was compelled to press his burning face to the burning ground, in order to escape the deadly clouds. Sometimes he heard some one's footstep or the rustle of spreading cloaks go past him; then he drew himself up in haste and alarm but only saw what he had seen often enough in those days, the wild beasts of the wilderness, wandering through the desert in joyous freedom. Now they were ugly camels, then long-necked awkward giraffes, and then again a long-legged ostrich, sailing along hastily with uneasy wings. All seemed to look on him with scorn and he resolved

not to open his eyes again and to perish of thirst, without letting these horrible and unfamiliar creatures disturb his spirit in the hour of death.

Once more he heard sounds near him, of horse-hoofs and a snorting horse, and suddenly it stopped close at his head, and he fancied human sounds were in his ears. Half against his will he could not help languidly lifting his head, and saw before him a rider in Arab dress on a slim Arab stallion. Overwhelmed with joy at seeing a man near him, he exclaimed: 'Welcome, O man, in this dreadful wilderness, and, if you can, refresh your fellow man, who else will perish of thirst!' And then bethinking himself that his dear German tongue could not be understood in these joyless regions he repeated the words in the mixed idiom, generally called *lingua Romana*, by which pagans, Mohammedans, and Christians make themselves understood by one another in those parts of the world where they chiefly come in contact.

The Arab remained silent and looked down with a sneer at this strange man at his feet. At length he replied in the same idiom: 'I too was in Barbarossa's battle, and if our defeat roused my bitter wrath, I find no small compensation in seeing one of the victors lying so pitifully on the ground before me.'

'Pitifully?' said Heimbert, and his sense of wounded honour giving him back his strength for a moment, he sprang up, bare sword in hand, ready to strike.

'Oho!' laughed the Arab, 'does the Christian adder hiss so loud? I need only press the flanks of my chestnut to fly off and leave you to die in the desert, you lost creeping worm!'

'Ride to the devil, heathen dog!' cried Heimbert in reply, 'sooner than beg a crumb from you I will die

here unless God bestows manna on me in the wilderness.'

Then the Arab galloped his fleet steed some two hundred paces, laughing loud and scornfully; halted, looked round at Heimbert and riding up again cried: 'Nay, you look too good a man to leave to die of thirst and hunger. Have a care! my goodly sabre shall not miss its mark.'

Heimbert, who in despair had stretched himself again upon the burning sand, at these words was once more on his feet in a moment, sword in hand, and swiftly as the Arab's horse flew at him with sudden spring the valiant German swordsman, making the horse shy from him, stood ready with a drawn sword and with firm and sure thrust parried the back-stroke which the rider in Mohammedan fashion had aimed at him with his scimitar. Several times did the Arab dash to and fro with the same manœuvre, hoping in vain to give the death-blow to his adversary; at length his impatience mastered him and he approached so boldly that Heimbert, striking away his threatening sword, found time to seize him by the girdle with his left hand and pull him off from his horse as it galloped on. The violent shock brought Heimbert to the ground, but he lay on top of the man he had overpowered, and holding close to his eyes a dagger which he had cleverly drawn from a sheath on his hip he said: 'Will you have mercy or death?'

The trembling Arab's eyes quailed before the threat of the flashing blade and answered: 'Have mercy on me, mighty warrior; I surrender to you.'

Thereupon he bade him throw away the sabre which he still held in his right hand; he did so, and both

combatants rose, but at once sank back on to the sand, for the victor felt far fainter than the vanquished.

Meanwhile the Arab's good horse had trotted up again, after the manner of these noble beasts, whose habit it is never to leave their fallen master. He stood behind them, with his long slender neck and friendly eyes above them.

'Arab,' said Heimbert, with exhausted voice, 'take from your horse the food and drink you carry with you and put it before me.'

The conquered man humbly did his bidding, as resolute in submission to his conqueror's will as he had shown himself before in anger and revenge. After a few draughts of palm-wine Heimbert looked with new life in his eyes at the young man beside him, then tasted some fruit, took another draught, and at last said: 'Did you mean to ride farther to-night, young man?'

'Yes, certainly,' replied the Arab with troubled eyes, 'my old father and my lovely bride live on an oasis, far, very far, away. Even if you gave me my full freedom, I must perish without food in the heat of the sandy desert before I could reach my beloved home.'

'Is that the oasis,' asked Heimbert, 'where the mighty enchantress Zelinda lives?'

'Allah forbid!' cried the Arab, striking his hands together. 'Zelinda's magic island offers a hospitable shore to none but magic folk, it lies deep in the scorching south; our friendly island rises towards the cooler west.'

'I only asked,' said Heimbert, 'to see whether we could travel together. If that may not be we must of course go shares, for I cannot allow so gallant a

knight as you to die of thirst and hunger.' And with that the young captain began to arrange food and drink in two portions, the larger on his left, the smaller on his right, and finally bade the Arab take the former, to his astonishment, and said: 'Look you, dear Sir, I either have little way to go, or I am fated to perish in the desert; I feel it must be so. Besides I cannot go so far on foot as you on horseback.'

'My lord, my conqueror!' cried the Mussulman amazed, 'am I then to keep my horse?'

'It would be a sin and a shame,' replied Heimbert with a laugh, 'to part so faithful a horse from so skilful a rider. Ride away, in God's name, and may you reach your friends in safety!'

Thereupon he helped him to mount, and the Arab was about to say words of thanks to him when he suddenly cried: 'The magic maiden!' and swift as the wind he flew over the dusty plain, while Heimbert, turning the other way, saw close beside him in the clear light of the moon, now high in the heavens, a gleaming figure, which he recognized in a moment as Zelinda.

CHAPTER XI

THE maiden looked long and steadily into the young soldier's eyes, and seemed to be trying to find words to address him, while he too, in the presence of her he had so long sought and had now unexpectedly found, was no less at a loss. At last she said in Spanish: 'You wondrous riddle, I have witnessed all that happened between you and the Arab and my brain is confused, as by a whirlwind, by incidents that I cannot understand. Therefore speak to me without

delay, that I may know whether you are a madman or an angel.'

'I am neither, dear lady,' replied Heimbert with his usual friendliness; 'I am only a traveller astray, who has just put in practice one of the commands of his dear Master, Jesus Christ.'

'Sit down,' said Zelinda, 'and tell me of your Master, who must be an extraordinary Master if he has servants like you. The night is cool and quiet and at my side you have nothing to fear from the dangers of the desert.'

'Lady,' said Heimbert with a smile, 'I am not of a timid nature and when I speak of my dear Saviour I have not the least reason to feel anxious.'

So the two sat upon the sand that had now cooled, and began a wonderful conversation, while the full moon, like a golden magic lamp, shone down on them from the deep-blue heavens. Heimbert's words, full of divine love, truth, and simplicity, sank into Zelinda's mind like gentle sunlight, with quiet inspiration, thrusting back the uncanny magic world that surged within it, and winning for a more gracious power the control of that noble domain. When the light of morning began to glimmer she said: 'You would not let me call you angel, yet you are one indeed, for what are angels but messengers of God most high?'

'In that sense,' replied Heimbert, 'I am content to be called so, for surely my hope is to be God's messenger. Yes, if He gives me strength and grace still further, I may perhaps get you to bear me company, one day, in that good office.'

' 'Tis not impossible,' said Zelinda thoughtfully, 'but you must first come with me to my island, and

there you shall be refreshed far better than you can be here on the desert sand by the pitiful and painfully won palm-wine.'

'Forgive me,' replied Heimbert, 'it is hard for me to refuse a lady's request, but this time it cannot be helped. On your island, look you, your forbidden art has conjured up a scene of much splendour, and transformed the gracious forms that God created. This might perplex my mind and perhaps in the end delude it. If then you really wish to hear what is best and purest, which I have skill to tell you, it is better that you should come out to me on the desert sand. The palm-wine and the dates of the Arab will suffice me for some days.'

'You would do better to come with me,' said Zelinda, shaking her head with a scornful smile. 'You are neither born nor bred to be a hermit, and things on my oasis do not look so bewildering as you might think. What difference does it make, that shrubs and flowers, and animals from different parts of the world have come together there, and that everything is strangely interlocked, each taking something from the nature of another much in the same way as you may have seen suggested in our Arabian sculpture? A moving flower, a bird flowering from a branch, a spring alight with fiery sparks, a singing twig—these are surely not ugly things.'

'Let him avoid temptation who will not perish in it,' said Heimbert very gravely; 'commend me to the desert. Is it your pleasure to come out here to me again?'

Zelinda looked down, somewhat displeased, then suddenly bending her head low she said: 'Yes, towards evening I will be here again.' She turned and

quickly disappeared in the rising whirlwind of the desert.

CHAPTER XII

As the night grew dark the charming guest returned, and watched the night through in conversation with the inspired youth, parting from him in the morning a humbler, purer, better woman; and this went on for several days in succession.

'Your palm-wine and your dates are giving out,' said Zelinda one day and offered him a flask of rare wine and some costly fruits, but he gently put the gift aside and said: 'Noble lady, I would gladly accept them, but I fear there is some taint of your magic arts about them; or could you assure me of the contrary in the name of Him, whom you are now beginning to acknowledge?'

Zelinda cast down her eyes in silent shame, and took her presents back again; but next evening she brought other gifts like them, and confidently gave the desired assurance. Heimbert took some of them without a qualm, and from that time forward the pupil provided, like a mother, for the maintenance of her teacher in the desert. And as the blessed recognition of the truth sank more deeply and intimately into Zelinda's heart, often when dawn was glowing red she was still sitting opposite the young man, with flushed cheeks, flowing hair, enraptured eyes, and folded hands, and could not bear to part from him as he talked; and then, as she came and went, he often took occasion to make her feel that it was only Federigo's passionate love that had driven him, his friend, to pursue her into the deadly desert, and thus had become

for her the precious means of her attaining to the highest good. She well remembered the handsome redoubtable captain who had captured the hill to clasp her in his arms, and she too told her friend how the same hero had rescued her afterwards in the flaming halls of the library. And then Heimbert had always much that was attractive to tell of Federigo—his noble chivalrous spirit, his grave and distinguished manners, and his love for Zelinda, which in the night after the battle of Tunis would not be prisoned in his passionate bosom, but betrayed itself, waking and sleeping, to the young German in a thousand unguarded expressions. Thus along with the divine truth the noble image of the loving hero sank into Zelinda's heart and struck roots at once tender and strong past breaking. Heimbert's presence and the almost adoring admiration with which his pupil looked up to him did not mar his success, for from the first moment his appearance had worn for her a pure and heavenly quality, which made thoughts of earthly love impossible. When Heimbert was alone he often smiled with pleasure to himself, saying in the German tongue he loved: 'How fine a thing it is that I can now repay to Federigo with full knowledge the service that he did me unawares with his angelic sister!' And then he sang to himself a German song of Clara's charm and goodness and beauty, till it echoed sweetly through the wilderness and made his lonely hours pass happily.

Once when Zelinda came to him in the evening light, in all the charm of her lively grace, carrying a basket of food for Heimbert on her lovely head, he shook his head and smiling said: 'I cannot understand, kind maiden, why you still take the trouble to come out to me in the wilderness. You can hardly find

pleasure any more in enchantments, now that the spirit of love and truth dwells in you; you could change the oasis back into the form in which God created it, and then I could go thither with you and we should have much more time for holy conversation.'

'Sir,' replied Zelinda, 'you are right; I have been thinking of it myself for some days, and I should have set about it before now but my power is hindered by a strange visit. The dervish, whom you saw in Tunis, is with me, and as we have often exchanged magic gifts with each other in old days he would like again to dominate my action. He notices the change in me, and so the pressure he exerts is more violent and dangerous.'

'He must be driven away or converted,' said Heimbert, as he tightened his sword-belt and lifted his targe from the ground. 'Be good enough, dear maiden, to guide me to the magic island.'

'You shunned it a while ago,' said the astonished maiden, 'and its romantic character is still unchanged.'

'Till now it would have been indiscreet to venture thither,' replied Heimbert; 'you came out to me and that was better for us both; but now the old man might lay snares for you, which might ruin what the Lord has wrought in you, and therefore it is a knight's duty to take the road. To work, then, in God's name!'

And they hastened side by side over the darkening desert to the beautiful island.

CHAPTER XIII

Magic airs began to play about their heads as they went forward, and in the distance they saw, by the flashing light of the stars, the underwood swaying up

and down at the breath of the gentle breezes. Heimbert cast his eyes down and said: 'Go in front, gracious maiden, and guide my path to the place where I shall find the threatening dervish. I will look on none of the delusive magic forms if I can help it.'

Zelinda complied with his wish, and so their parts were, for the moment, reversed; the maiden had become the guide, Heimbert one who, in friendly confidence, let himself be guided on untrodden ways.

Branches half teasing, half caressing, already brushed his cheeks, magic birds growing from the bushes sang joyously; over the silky turf of the ground on which Heimbert kept his eyes fixed, glided snakes of brilliant gold and green with golden coronets, and jewels blossomed from the carpet of moss; when the snakes touched them, there was a silvery tinkle. The traveller did not heed the movement of the snakes or the sparkle of the jewels, only intent to follow his guide with all speed.

'We are at the place,' she said, with voice subdued, and looking up he saw a shining hollow, with a grotto of shells, and was aware of a sleeping man within it, completely clad in old Numidian fashion in golden scale-armour.

'Is he too a phantasm, the man in the golden scales?' asked Heimbert smiling, but Zelinda looked very grave and answered: 'No, that is the dervish himself, and that he has put on this armour, hardened by magic dragon's blood, is a proof that he has been warned of our purpose by his magic.'

'What matter?' said Heimbert, 'he was bound to learn it sometime,' and at the same time he began to cry with cheerful voice 'Wake up, old man, wake up! Here is an acquaintance who must speak with you.'

Then, as the dervish opened his great rolling eyes, everything in the magic enclosure began to move—the water to dance, the branches to entangle themselves with one another in furious combat, and the rocks and shells and corals rang with wondrous bewildering melodies.

'Roll and twist as you will, thunder and whistle away!' cried Heimbert, looking firmly at the tumult. 'You shall not turn me from my good purpose, and to outdo this clamour God has given me a strong and resonant soldier's voice.' Then he turned to the dervish and said: 'Old man, it seems that you know all that has passed between Zelinda and me; but should that not be so, I will tell you in a word that she is as good as a Christian and betrothed to a noble Spanish knight. You will do well to put nothing in the way of her holy purpose; but it will be far better for you if you yourself become a Christian. Confer with me on this and first make this mad devil's mummery be silent. Look you, dear Sir, our doctrine cherishes things far too tender and too heavenly for any one to shriek them forth with the rude violence of war.'

But the dervish, with hatred kindled against Christians, had already ceased to listen to the knight's last words and pressed close on him with drawn scimitar. Heimbert only guarded himself with his rapier saying: 'Beware, Sir! I have had some hint that your weapon is bewitched, but such weapons cannot stand before this sword of mine. It has had its consecration in holy places.'

The dervish gave a wild spring back from the sword's point, but no less wildly attacked his enemy on the other side, so that the target barely checked the fearful stroke of his scimitar. The Mohammedan, like

a golden-scaled dragon swung round his opponent with an agility to which his long waving beard gave a horrible ghostly aspect. Heimbert, firm and deliberate, resisted his blows on all sides, keeping a keen eye for any place where his violent movements might displace the scales. At last his hope was fulfilled; the dark dress of the dervish showed on his left side between arm and heart, and quick as lightning the German's sword-point pierced him. The old man cried aloud: 'Allah! Allah! Allah!' and fell forward lifeless to the ground, terrible even in his fall.

'I pity him,' sighed Heimbert, leaning on his sword and looking down on the man he had killed. 'He fought honourably and as he died he called on Allah, which may well mean God to him. He shall not want due burial. Whereupon he hollowed out a grave with his foe's broad scimitar, laid the body in it, covered it with turf, and kneeling at the place uttered a quiet but heartfelt prayer for the soul of the man he had slain.

CHAPTER XIV

When Heimbert rose from his pious duty his first glance fell on Zelinda who stood smiling at his side, his second on his surroundings, which were utterly transformed. Cavern and grotto had disappeared and with them the half-attractive, half-fearsome figures of animals and trees; a gently sloping meadow stretched on all hands in charming verdure from the height where Heimbert stood down to the level desert. Here and there springs gushed out with delicious freshness, date-palms nodded their heads above the little paths; everything smiled in sweet and simple peace as the flush of dawn arose.

'Surely,' said Heimbert to his companion, 'you must feel it a blessed thought that our heavenly Father creates all things infinitely more gracious, greater, and more beautiful than anything to which the highest human art can transform them. The heavenly Gardener, in his abounding mercy, has allowed us, his beloved children, to help him in his beneficent works, that we may gain in joy and goodness; but we must be careful to transform none of his creatures from wilful arbitrary caprice. That would be to drive ourselves a second time from Paradise.'

'It shall not happen again,' said Zelinda, bending her head humbly before the young man; 'but could you not venture in this lovely region, where we cannot find for some time a priest of our faith, to grant me the new-born creature the boon of Holy Baptism, without delay.

Heimbert thought a while and then answered: 'I hope I may do it, and if I am wrong God will forgive me. I do it in my zeal to lead a heavenly soul to Him as soon as may be.'

Then the two walked in quiet prayer, wearing a blessed smile, to one of the most lovely springs in the oasis, and when they had reached its margin and made ready for the sacred rite, the sun arose before their eyes as if confirming and ennobling it, so that the two faced one another in joyous confidence, with their faces illuminated by the transfiguring light. Heimbert had given no thought to the Christian name that he would choose for the neophyte, but as he drew the water and saw the desert lying around him, in the quiet solemnity of dawn, he could not but think of the holy hermit St. Antony in the Egyptian desert and christened his lovely convert Antonia.

They spent the day in pious conversation, and Antonia showed her friend a little cave, where in the early days of her dwelling in the desert she had hidden all kinds of food for her sustenance. 'For,' said she, 'God is my witness that I came hither only that I might better understand God and his creation, in solitude, without having the least thought then of any magic assistance. It was but later that the dervish came to tempt me, and with his terrible doctrines the terrors of the desert entered into a fearsome league, which led to everything that alluring spirits revealed to me day by day, waking or in dreams.'

Heimbert did not hesitate to load himself for the journey with such wine and dried fruits as were fit for use, and Antonia assured him that taking the direct way, which was known to her, they would reach in a few days the fertile shore of this waterless ocean. As the cool of evening came on the two began their journey.

CHAPTER XV

The travellers had already almost passed through the pathless plains when one day they saw, far away, a human figure wandering uncertainly, for in the desolate Sahara every object, even in the dim distance, is visible unless it is hidden by the whirling sand with its suffocating sport. The wanderer seemed to be going round like one lost, taking now this direction and now that, and Antonia, with the hawk's eye of an Oriental, was pleased to notice that it was no Arab but a man dressed as a knight.

'Dear sister!' cried Heimbert, half anxious, half delighted, 'it is poor Federigo, who is searching for you. In God's name let us hasten before he loses us

and perhaps, in the end, his own life.' They used every effort to overtake the distant figure, but as it was high noon and the sun shone down with fiery heat, Antonia could not long bear their rapid advance, and besides the fearful storms of sand soon sprang up, and the figure that they could scarcely see faded away before the eyes of the searchers like a vision of mist in autumn. When the clear moonlight came on they began again to give wings to their walking, to call to the lost traveller and to hang white bits of cloth to flutter on the end of their staffs in the deep blue of heaven, like flags to lure and invite the wanderer, but all in vain. What had vanished, had vanished indeed. Only the giraffes sprang more timidly past them and the ostriches sailed on their course in wilder haste.

At last Antonia halted in the morning twilight and said: 'Brother you cannot leave me in this lonely place, and I cannot go a step further: God will protect the noble Federigo: how could our Father forsake so gracious a pattern of knighthood?'

'The pupil puts her teacher to shame,' replied Heimbert, relaxing his troubled face in a gentle smile. 'We have done our part and we can confidently hope that God will come to the help of our failing powers, and supply our need.' With that he spread his cloak on the sand that Antonia might rest more firmly and at ease; but suddenly he sprang up again and cried: 'By heavens! there lies some one, completely buried by the sand; I pray he may not be dead already!' and at once he began to pour a trickle of wine from a flask on the fallen man's brow and to rub his temples with it.

He slowly raised his eyes and said: 'I wish the morning dew had not besprinkled me again and I had died here in the desert unknown and unmourned, as

indeed it must end at last.' With that he closed his eyes again like a man drunk with sleep, but Heimbert unwearied, continued his ministrations and at last the awakened figure half raised itself up in amazement. He looked from Heimbert to his companion and again from her to Heimbert; then suddenly gnashing his teeth he cried: 'This then was to be my fate! I am not even to have the dull luck of dying in peace, though forsaken! No, I was first to see my rival victorious and my sister scorned! And with these words he rose to his feet with a mighty effort, and rushed at Heimbert, with his sword drawn ready to strike.

Heimbert did not move sword or arm but only said gently: 'I cannot stir to harm you, exhausted as you are, and besides I must first put the lady in safety.'

Antonia, who at first gazed at the pair in deep emotion, suddenly stepped between them and cried: 'Ah, Federigo, neither misery nor anger can quite distort your features; but what has my noble brother done to you?'

'Brother?' said Federigo, astonished.

'Or godfather, or sponsor,' replied Heimbert, 'whichever you like. But do not call her Zelinda, for her name is now Antonia, she is a Christian and your betrothed.'

Federigo stood utterly amazed, but Heimbert's true-hearted words and Antonia's lovely blush soon solved the blessed riddle. He sank back in sweet rapture before the face of the lady of his desire and the inhospitable desert blossomed heavenwards with mingled love and gratitude and trust.

The strain of this surprising good fortune at last gave way to bodily exhaustion. Antonia, like a wilted flower, laid her lovely body to rest on the ground still

scorched with heat, and went to sleep under the protection of her beloved and the brother of her choice. 'You too must sleep,' said Heimbert quietly to Federigo; 'you must have had wild and painful wanderings, for your eyelids are weighed down with leaden exhaustion: I am thoroughly awake and will keep guard meanwhile.'

'Ah, Heimbert,' sighed the noble Spaniard, 'my sister is yours of course, my heavenly messenger, but as for our affair of honour——'

'It is natural that you should give me the satisfaction you owe, for your hasty words,' said Heimbert very gravely, 'as soon as we are back in Spain. Till then I beg that we should not speak of it. An unsettled debt of honour does not make good talk.'

Federigo lay down sadly on the sand, overpowered by the sleep he had lacked so long, and Heimbert knelt down with joy to thank God for his hopes fulfilled so far, and to confide his future to Him in glad confidence.

CHAPTER XVI

Next day the three travellers arrived at the margin of the desert and refreshed themselves for nearly a week in a little village near by, which with its shady trees and border of green sward was like a little Paradise contrasted with the joyless Sahara. Federigo's condition, above all, made this rest necessary. He had never left the desert all the time, wresting his subsistence with difficulty from the wandering Arabs and often almost succumbing for want of food and drink. At last he was so completely astray that even the stars could not give him guidance to the right way and he

wandered about in a dreary aimless fashion, like the sand-storms of the desert around him.

Sometimes, when he fell asleep after their midday meal and Antonia and Heimbert guarded his slumbers like a pair of smiling angels, he would start up in terror, stare around with looks of horror, and only sink back to refreshing rest when he had regaled his sight with the two friendly faces. When questioned about this after he awoke he answered that the most terrible thing in his wanderings had been the delusive dreams, which had carried him, now into his own home, now into his comrades' cheerful camp, and again, it might be, somewhere near Zelinda, and then had disappeared, leaving him doubly helpless and wretched in the terrible desert. That was why, whenever he woke, he was beset with fears, and even his sleep was often driven away by a dim consciousness of past terrors thrilling through him. 'You cannot imagine it,' he added. 'To be suddenly banished from familiar walls into the boundless desert, and to see, perhaps, instead of the face of the longed-for beloved that had been conjured before me, an ugly camel's head on its long neck bending curiously over me and then, when I raised myself, bounding back with a still uglier startled face.'

This and other after-effects of the troubles he had gone through soon completely disappeared from Federigo's mind and they gaily began their journey to Tunis. The consciousness of the wrong he had done Heimbert and its inevitable consequence did, indeed, often overshadow the noble Spaniard's brow like a faint cloud, but that only softened the inborn proud severity of his bearing and enabled Antonia's loving heart to attach itself more closely and tenderly to his.

Tunis, which in earlier days had gazed with wonder at Zelinda's magic power and her enthusiastic enmity against Christians, now witnessed Antonia's solemn baptism in a newly consecrated place, and soon after the three companions set sail with a favouring wind for Malaga.

CHAPTER XVII

Donna Clara was sitting one evening, deep in thought, by the fountain where she had parted from Heimbert. The guitar on her bosom sounded a few solitary chords that her fair fingers drew from it half in a dream, and they resolved themselves into a melody, while the following words flowed softly from her half-open lips:

When afar by Tunis' ramparts
Spanish troops and German battled
With the fierce host of the Paynim,
Say who from the blood-stained lilies
And from death's pale bed of roses
Plucked the victor's prize of battle.
Ask of Alva, ask of Alva,
And he names at once two warriors;
One was my undaunted brother,
One my heart's belovèd hero!
And I thought: I shall be crownèd
In a double blaze of triumph.
Lo, there falls, for double mourning,
Widow's weeds o'er eyes and forehead,
For the knights are lost and never
Search of men avails to find them.

The guitar was silent, and gentle dewdrops fell from her heavenly eyes. Heimbert, hidden beneath the orange trees near by, felt the tears falling upon his

cheeks in sympathy, and Federigo, who had led him and Antonia thither, could no longer bear to leave untasted the cup of joy for their happy reunion, but, with the two beloved figures on either hand came out and gave his sister an angel's greeting.

The spectacle of such moments of deep overwhelming joy, like the dew of heaven's blessing, always dreamt of but rarely falling, is best pictured by every one for himself in his own way, and it is doing him an ill service to relate what was said and done. You, dear Reader, if you have made friends with the two pairs in my story and taken them to your heart, best know what happened and can paint the scene to your desire. If not, why waste idle words? For those whose hearts have dwelt in sincere joy on the rediscovery of brother and sister and lovers I continue my tale with the greater confidence.

Though Heimbert, giving a meaning look to Federigo, wished to withdraw as soon as Antonia had come under Donna Clara's care, the noble Spaniard would not consent. With brotherly charm and confidence he insisted on his brother-in-arms joining the supper which was attended by some relations of the house of Mendez, in whose presence Federigo announced the brave Heimbert of Waldhausen as Donna Clara's betrothed, sealing the engagement with the most solemn words, so that it should be irrevocable whatever event might seem to hinder the contract. The witnesses were somewhat astonished at these strange provisions, but at Federigo's desire assented to them, and the more readily as the Duke of Alva, who was in Malaga on some naval business, had filled the whole city with the fame of the two young captains.

While the finest wine was passing round the table in

tall glasses Federigo came behind Heimbert's chair and whispered to him: 'If it please you, Señor, the moon has risen and shines as clear as day. I am ready to give you the necessary satisfaction.' Heimbert gave a friendly nod and the two young men left the hall, accompanied by the loving greetings of their unconscious brides.

As they passed through the garden's fragrant enclosure, Federigo said with a sigh: 'We might have had a delightful walk here, had I not been overhasty!'

'Yes,' said Heimbert, 'but so it is, and nothing can alter it, so long as we are both to regard one another still as soldiers and gentlemen.'

'Of course!' replied Federigo, and they hastened to reach a distant part of the garden, from which the sound of their clashing swords might not be carried to the cheerful hall of their betrothal.

CHAPTER XVIII

A SILENT ring of flowering shrubs surrounded the spot, the murmur of the joyous company was heard no longer, the noise of the lively streets of the city did not reach it; only the full moon high in the heavens looked on the scene, illuminating the solemn circle with its brilliant light. It was the very place for them. Both captains drew their gleaming swords and faced one another ready for the combat. But before they crossed swords a nobler feeling drew them to one another's arms; they lowered their swords and closed in a brotherly embrace. Then they parted resolutely and the terrible duel began.

They were no longer brothers-in-arms, no longer friends or brothers-in-law, who pointed their flashing

rapiers against one another. Each combatant attacked his adversary with the most resolute boldness and most cool deliberation while guarding his own breast at the same time. After a few fierce and perilous passes the combatants had to rest, and meanwhile looked on one another with increased affection, each glad to find his beloved companion such a splendid swordsman; and then the deadly combat began again.

Heimbert with his left hand struck aside Federigo's weapon, which aimed a thrust in tierce, but the sharp point pierced his leathern glove and the young red blood flowed fast. 'Hold!' cried Federigo, and they examined the wound but soon found it a trifling one, and bound it up and resumed the fight with undiminished vigour.

It was not long before Heimbert's sword struck Federigo's right shoulder and the German feeling that it was a hit, called 'hold!' in his turn. At first Federigo would not admit being wounded, but presently the blood began to flow and he saw himself forced to accept his friend's attentive services, but this wound too, appeared insignificant, the Spaniard felt strong enough in hand and arm to handle his sword, and once more the deadly duel was resumed with knightly ardour.

But now the garden gate close by gave a click, and a horse's hoofs were heard approaching through the undergrowth. Both combatants paused in their stern business and turned towards the unwelcome disturber. He soon became visible on a tall charger, his dress and dignity proclaiming him a soldier, and Federgo, as master of the house, addressed him, in these words: 'Señor, now is not the moment to inquire how you

come to ride into a strange garden thus boldly; for the moment I need only ask you to free us from further interference by retiring at once, and in any case to leave your name with us.'

'I will not ride away,' replied the stranger, 'but I will gladly tell you my name. I am the Duke of Alva.' And as his horse turned at that moment the bright moonlight fell on the long pale face, the seat of greatness, dignity, and terror. The two combatants bowed humbly and lowered their swords.

'I ought to know you,' continued Alva, as his flashing eyes scanned their features. 'Yes, indeed, I know you well, you two young heroes of the battle of Tunis. Glory and praise to God that two such stout warriors, whom I had almost given up for lost, are still alive! but tell me what affair of honour has turned your brave swords against each other; for you will, I hope, have no scruple in revealing to me the secret of your knightly encounter.'

They obeyed the great Duke's will. Each of the young nobles told his story, from the evening before embarkation down to the present moment, while Alva remained almost motionless between them in silent thought, like an equestrian statue.

CHAPTER XIX

The Duke remained still silent long after the captains had finished their story, in deep reflection and immovable. At length he broke the silence and spoke as follows: 'So help me God and His holy words, young knights, my knowledge and my conscience bid me regard your affair of honour as fought out to the end. Twice have you faced one another in combat on

account of the insulting words that fell from Don Federigo Mendez' lips, and if, indeed, the trifling wounds that you have received till now do not suffice to make amends for that appalling language, yet your fighting side by side at Tunis, and the rescue in the desert which Sir Heimbert of Waldhausen bestowed on Don Federigo Mendez, after he had won for him his bride, counts for so much that Sir Heimbert is justified in pardoning any offence from one to whom he has shown such deep affection. The history of ancient Rome tells of two captains of the great Julius Caesar who laid aside a conflict of honour and, fighting bravely side by side, became close friends and brothers and helped one another when surrounded by an army of Gauls. But I remember that you two have done more than this for one another and so I declare your quarrel settled and at an end. Sheathe your swords then and embrace in my presence.'

Obedient to their General's command the young knights for the moment put up their swords, but concerned for any possible shadow that might fall upon their honour, they hesitated to embrace and be reconciled.

Then Alva eyed them with some impatience and said: 'What! do you imagine, young Sirs, that I should wish to keep alive two brave soldiers at the price of their honour? I would sooner have struck them dead beyond recall, yes both together, but I see that I must use other measures with such headstrong persons.'

And he dismounted, quickly tethered his horse to a tree, and with his drawn sword in his hand stepped between the two captains, crying aloud: 'Whoever wishes to dispute the fact that the quarrel between Sir Heimbert of Waldhausen and Don Federigo

Mendez has been fought out with honour and credit, must dispute it with the Duke of Alva at the peril of his life, and should the knights here present have any objection to raise, they are to declare it: I stand here to defend my convinced judgement.'

The young men bowed in submission before the great arbiter of their honour and fell into one another's arms. But the Duke embraced them both with sincere affection, which appeared the more delightful and enchanting because his stern nature rarely gave expression to such feelings. Then he led back the two reconciled knights to their future brides, and when the ladies, after their first surprise and pleasure at the honoured General's presence, trembled at sight of the drops of blood on the young men's dress, the Duke said smiling: 'You ladies, who are to be soldiers' wives, must not be startled at such jewels of honour: your loved ones can bring you no fairer marriage present.'

The Duke of Alva insisted on giving away both the happy brides and providing their marriage-feast next day.

From this time forward they all lived on in joyous and undisturbed harmony, and though soon afterwards Sir Heimbert was recalled with his lovely wife to the bosom of his native country, they kept touch with one another by letters and messages of greeting and in later years the descendants of Heimbert of Waldhausen boasted of their connexion with the noble family of Mendez, while the Mendez family always retained among its honoured memories the story of the brave and magnanimous Heimbert.

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